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VOICE OF REVOLUTION

Publication of the U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization

November 7, 2014

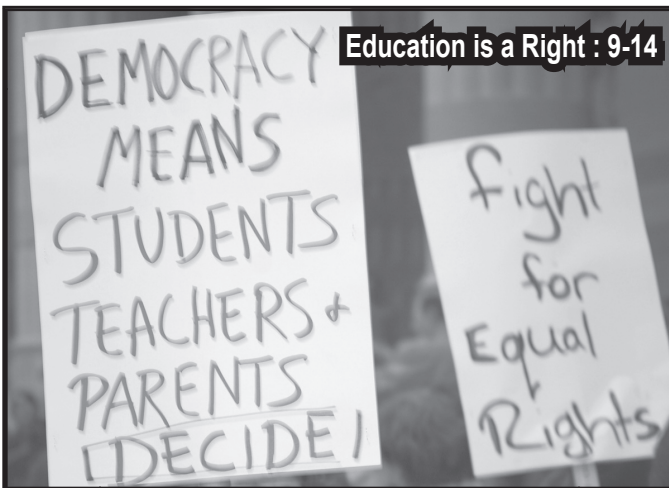
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New Direction for Political Affairs: 1-8



Education is a Right : 9-14



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ELECTIONS 2014

Organize for a New Direction for Political Affairs

Election results for 2014 were perhaps most significant for the low voter turnout, on average about 36.6% with some states like New York less than 30% (see article p.4). People are both broadly angry with government and the existing set-up, with many expressing that elections are not a mechanism for their voice to be heard. The control they are concerned about is

New Direction for Politics • 3

Public School System is a Public Good, Not a “Monopoly”

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo declared that public schools are a “monopoly” that need to be broken up. Recently re-elected, he is at the forefront of statewide efforts to dismantle the public school system, eliminate local school districts and local school governance. In a meeting with the *New York Daily News* editorial board, he said he would work hard to bust up “one of the only remaining public monopolies,” referring to public education. He repeated his support for

Public Schools a Public Good • 8

OCTOBER 22 SHOOTING AT WAR MEMORIAL

Canadians Suffer Results of Harper Government’s Anarchy and Violence

Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist)

The Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) calls on Canadians to remain calm in the light of developments taking place in Ottawa at this time following the shooting of a soldier at the War Memorial. As the events unfolded it became clear that the various levels of police forces, armed forces, various levels of the state and the media all went

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Publication of the U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization
www.usmlo.org • office@usmlo.org • 716-602-8077
3942 N. Central Ave, Chicago, IL 60634

I • New Direction for Political Affairs

control over decisions that affect their lives, and the current state of political affairs robs them of that. It blocks them from having a say. This is a main reason many people joined in building independent candidates and voted for them. In various areas these efforts to develop the independent politics of the people where *we decide* are continuing after the elections, in recognition of the fact that a new, independent direction for political affairs is needed.

In New York State, for example, independent Green Party candidate for Governor Howie Hawkins received 5% of the vote, a record for an independent. In some voting districts, including in Buffalo, he came in second, above the Republican candidate. This is in part due to the broad organizing work done, which successfully won the endorsement of the Buffalo Teachers Federation. These and similar efforts are going forward and contributing to breaking with the politics of the rich and advancing the independent politics of the working class.

In terms of the candidates elected, this elections generally went as predicted. Republicans now have a small majority in the 100-member Senate, 52-44 with two independents. This compares to the Democrats previous majority of 53-45 and two independents. Alaska and Louisiana are still undecided.

The monopoly media is presenting the Republican gains in the elections as a referendum against President Obama. No doubt many, from all party affiliations, are angry with Obama.

But the exit polls, and those shortly before the election all indicated something else — voters are angry with government, consider that the country is headed in the wrong direction and do not think their votes matter. This was expressed by Democratic, Republican and independent voters. Polls indicate, for example, that six in 10 say they cannot trust the government in Washington to do what is right. In another 74 percent said they were dissatisfied with the way the nation is being governed. Similarly, 68 percent, or 2/3 say the country is headed in the wrong direction. This is up from about 50 percent in exit polls in 2012. People targeted President Obama and Congress, Republicans and Democrats, the big-money outside contributors and the Supreme Court decisions that opened the financial floodgates for negative advertisements.

The large majority expressed their anger and opposition to



the current political set-up by not voting, with turn out in most areas below 37% and in some only 25-30 percent. The majority stood firmly with “None of the Above!” Others expressed their anger by refusing to vote for incumbents. Voters across the country uniformly denounced the billions being wasted on the elections and the unending negative ads. These served to discourage people from voting when elections are supposed to encourage participation in political affairs.

Many commented that while they were voting, there were no candidates they wanted to vote for. There was no one that represented their interests and stood for principle. This reflects in part the fact that the system is rigged against having worker politicians from among the ranks of the working class. Overall, 8 in 10 congressional seats were locks for the incumbent, with many uncontested. In New York, for example, at the state level, about 1/3

of both house and senate seats were uncontested. This situation stems mainly from the way voting districts are drawn, with both big parties of the rich agreeing to carve them up so one party’s chances are close to zero, and challengers face huge obstacles to participation.

Voters are not the ones choosing the candidates. They are not the ones deciding to have billions spent on advertising. Given the power, people would undoubtedly spend the funds for more important matters, like education. They would also demand that the public airwaves serve the public, by informing the public about the content of a given candidate’s proposals and outlawing the negative mud-slinging.

The change in majority in the Senate is not going to change a set-up that is designed to keep working people out and rich people in. A new direction for political affairs is needed, one that puts empowering the people themselves front and center. We need a set-up where we decide, at our workplaces, universities, senior centers, the agenda and we choose candidates from among our peers to represent that agenda. We need our own worker politicians accountable to us, not the mega-donors and monopolies. We need a set-up where elections are a time to inform the public about social problems and engage the public in discussion on their solutions. We need a democracy of our own making, where we, the people, decide! Organizing together today to build these independent politics and a unified fighting front in defense of the rights of all can and must be done!

NEED FOR A MODERN DEMOCRACY

Two Thirds of Voters Did Not Vote in 2014 Election

Voter turnout for the 2014 elections was about 36.4 percent, meaning almost 2/3 of voters did not vote. It is estimated that only 13% of voters were under 30. About 40% of non-voters are estimated to be African American or Latino.

In the large majority of races, this means that the candidate who won not only did not win a majority of eligible voters, they won with less than 25% of the vote. In places like New York, it was more like 15% or even less. It can hardly be considered an election representative of the population in each state.

The turnout was lower than the 2010 midterms in all but twelve states. This despite voters being inundated with a record almost \$4 billion in campaign ads and materials of various kinds. Some states, like California, lost more than 10 percent in voter participation. (The comparison is made to midterm, non-presidential years as there is always greater participation when the president is being elected.)

Across the country voters expressed their anger with all the negative ads, with government as a whole and with the lack of candidates they wanted to vote for by not voting. Big states like New York (29.5%) and Texas (28.5%) were among the lowest. Five other states had between 28-30%, Indiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Utah. Many other states had 37% or less, including Georgia 34.1%, New Jersey 30.4%, Ohio 36.2%, Pennsylvania 36.1%, South Carolina 34.9%, and Virginia 36.7%. Even states that were branded as ones with “contested” races were low. North Carolina, where record millions were spent, had 40.7%. Florida, also with record spending had 43.1%, Illinois 39.5%, Michigan was 42.7%, and Kansas 42.8%. Only six states had more than 50%, Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, Maine, Oregon and Wisconsin.

The lack of participation is in part a reflection of a set-up that keeps the people out of office and discourages them from participating in politics, and elections in particular. It is clear that the billions being spent are not meant to involve and inform people. The tens of millions required just to run, and the content that only those most unprincipled and dirty can win, serve to depoliticize people. The set-up serves to block working people — the majority — from playing their rightful role as decision makers in all political affairs.

None of the politicians of the rich have solutions to the problem of low voter turnout. For the most part they are not concerned about it and they also run negative campaigns that contribute to it. Spending caps will not solve this problem. The rich also use low turnout to blame the people for the problems the rich create, repeating that if you do not vote you cannot complain!

It is significant that President Obama commented on the



turnout in his remarks November 5, after the elections. He said the American people had sent a general message that “They expect the people they elect to work as hard as they do. They expect us to focus on their ambitions and not ours. They want us to get the job done. All of us, in both parties, have a responsibility to address that sentiment. Still, as President, I have a unique responsibility to try and make this town work. So, to everyone who voted, I want you to know that I hear you. To the two-thirds of voters who chose not to participate in the process yesterday, I hear you, too.”

This means Obama will likely be using the low turnout to say he too has a “mandate” to act. He can say the two-thirds want him to “get the job done.” His “unique responsibility” as president is to use executive actions. One can thus predict that yet more executive actions and concentration of power in the presidency will take place, as Obama says the “two-thirds” and more are on his side. Republican majorities can do nothing to block to this direction, short of impeachment.

The majority — working people — need to take their rightful place as decision makers in all political affairs. A set-up is needed that ensures people can choose their own worker politicians representing their interests, where all candidates have equal media time to present their views, where they are required to provide solutions to the agenda the people themselves decide, where recall at any time can be used as a mechanism for accountability. Let all join in strengthening efforts in this direction and in contributing to building a modern democracy of our own making that guarantees the right of the people themselves to govern and decide.

DECISION MAKING CONTROL BY THE PEOPLE NEEDED

Congressional “Control” in Conditions of Anarchy and Chaos

Nearly all the headlines of the monopoly media about the elections are focusing on the fact that Republicans won “control” of the Senate and now “control” both the Senate and the House. Numerous articles speak to how this was achieved, that it represents a “referendum” against President Obama, and so forth. What is consistently left out is the fact that in conditions of anarchy, chaos and broad government impunity, as now exists abroad and at home, the character of a given situation is one that is out of control. Anarchy, by definition, cannot be controlled. And for the

people, the central issue of control is that they are not decision makers over the political and economic issues that affect their lives. They do not control who decides, which is the key problem. Decision making by the people themselves is what a modern democracy requires, and precisely what the media, pundits and political elite are silent on.

The conditions of anarchy and lack of control among the elite is evident in the in-fighting taking place, between the president and Congressional leaders, as well as that between Obama and the military and his various advisors. Various military generals, for example, criticize Obama, their Commander, about the bombing and troops against Iraq and Syria. Some are openly contradicting him, saying far more troops are needed and will be sent. This public display is indicative of both the anarchy and impunity, where those in power — in this case the president and the generals involved — give themselves the right to act in a manner contrary to established norms and laws. The president engages in aggressive war without Congressional approval and the Generals engage in public attacks on their commander. All are acting against the peoples and facilitating the striving of U.S. imperialism for world empire, no matter what the consequences to the peoples and the cause of world peace.

Obama Meets with Congressional Leaders

When Obama met with Congressional leaders November 7, issues at home were the main topics. Both at the meeting and after, the intensifying conflicts were on display. Republicans threatened Obama against using executive action on immigration, saying if he does they will not attempt to reach agreements on other issues, like the budget. Some Democrats complained openly that Obama either should have acted before or should not act now. His failure to act allowed “a sustained, continuous conversation” among Democrats to fester and openly expose intra-party divisions. Advisors, like David Axelrod, are also saying Obama should “shelve” immigration. Obama, showing his readiness to increase executive actions, responded that he has waited



for two years and he is definitely going to take action, perhaps before the new Congress is seated in January. None of these positions serve to resolve the issue of immigration, or the upcoming budget, or matters of war and peace, in a manner that favors the people.

On immigration Obama may act to stop a portion of undocumented workers from getting deported. But it will be on the basis of forcing them to register with the government and potentially still get deported. As well, one way Obama might lessen

opposition to executive action is to include plans for a federally issued, biometric identification card for all workers. Such action is backed by the monopolies and widely supported in Congress. He may also include more use of drones at the borders and more detention centers. In this manner, the demand for an end to deportations could be transformed into yet more militarization and repression while appearing to “unite” the contending factions in government.

There is little indication that Republicans with their majority in both Houses will stop the contention in their ranks and with the president. Congressional dysfunction does not stem from the lack of majorities. It reflects the change in governing arrangements that concentrates power in far fewer hands, at the executive level, while greatly limiting the role for legislative bodies. They are seen as obstacles by the most powerful monopolies to securing the public treasury, public institutions and public assets. And though power is more concentrated, it is accompanied not by more control and stability but more intense competition, conflict, anarchy and violence.

Control Requires Decision Making by the People

While the monopoly media talk about “control,” they are silent on what is most essential. To deny people the right to participate in taking decisions that affect their lives is the greatest loss of control there can be. The election campaigns and actions since are also means to deprive people of the ability to think and discuss social problems and their solutions. Everyone is at the mercy of decisions taken by those in power over which the people exercise no control. This is true for the spending and character of the elections themselves, as well as the brutal pro-war, anti-social offensive the rulers and their politicians have and will continue to impose. The change in control that is needed is a change in who decides. The people themselves need to be decision makers in political and economic affairs so as to take control over their lives and contribute to building a democracy of our own making that defends the rights of all.

RECORD \$4 BILLION SPENT

Fund the Process Not the Candidates

A record almost \$4 billion will be spent on federal mid-term Congressional House and Senate races in 2014. The total also includes governors' races in thirty-six states, including California, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Wisconsin and Texas. Florida's governor's race topped \$104 million, Illinois' a record \$100 million, Texas \$90 million, with negative ads dominating the races. These funds do not include the tens of millions spent 60 days prior to the election by outside groups not required to report to the Federal Election Commission (FEC).

Total spending by all the candidates themselves is expected to be about \$1.66 billion, down from the \$1.79 billion they spent in 2010 (the last non-presidential election). In the 2010 cycle, all House candidates spent just over \$1 billion, and this time they will likely spend \$945.9 million. Similarly, Senate candidates spent \$779.9 million in 2010, and will spend \$636.2 million in 2014.

Super PACs (Political Action Committees) and other political groups — commonly forces that do not even live in the state or district — are expected to spend close to \$1 billion, with about 80 percent of it on negative ads. Six of every ten dollars in reported spending by outside groups so far this election has come from Super PACs.

An additional \$100 million and more is being spent on “issue ads” that do not name a candidate. These are often done by astroturf groups, fake “grassroots” non-profits posing as advocates for a given cause but actually campaigning for particular private monopoly interests and the candidates they back, conservative and liberal alike.

In most races spending by forces other than the candidate, such as Super PACs, astroturf and party committees, far exceeds that of the candidate. In many races it is double, or more, than that of the candidate. This is an indication that candidate spending caps will not solve the problem of massive amounts of campaign spending and negative ads.

These outside spenders are also indicative of the change in the role of the parties. The state-level parties, which used to be the bulwark of the Democrats and Republicans, play almost no role. And while the Democratic and Republican National Committees still function, they are being surpassed by the role of Super PACs and other outside spenders. This is evident in spending by both, which is down in 2014 compared to 2010. Of the almost \$4 billion, the Democratic National Committee will spend about \$148 million, a decline from the \$176.5 million in 2010. The Republican National Committee will spend about \$164.9 million.

That will be a drop from the \$185 million it spent in 2010.

In addition, particular representatives and operatives are developing their own machinery, independent of the parties. Expected presidential candidate for 2016 Hillary Clinton did 45 events in 54 days coming into Election Day, in part to build up her machinery. Current head of the Senate, Harry Reid, who is not up for election, has the “Senate Majority PAC,” which he controls. It was among the top 5 groups buying ads the last two weeks of the election. The astroturf non-profit Crossroads GPS and the Super PAC American Crossroads were also among the top five. Both are machinery for Karl Rove and the Carlyle interests that backed the Bush presidencies. The Koch brothers, also representing oil interests, have a new Super PAC called Freedom Partners Action Fund. They have donated more than \$196 million in the last several years to dozens of astroturf advocacy organizations that intervene in elections, commonly with negative “issue” ads.

Overall, like the economy, where power is being concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, political funding and electoral machinery is also being concentrated in fewer hands.

Recent polls indicate that only 4 percent of voters think any of the politicians will actually keep their promises, which themselves are usually very vague. The massive negative ads also contributed to the low turnout for the elections. Both reflect the growing consciousness among the people that the existing electoral set up and its elections do not serve their interest.

To eliminate negative ads and provide a process that involves and informs the public, what is needed is funding of the process, not the candidates. The *process* needs to be publicly funded — not the candidates, parties, Super PACS or astroturf groups. The process needs to be publicly controlled and in the public interest.

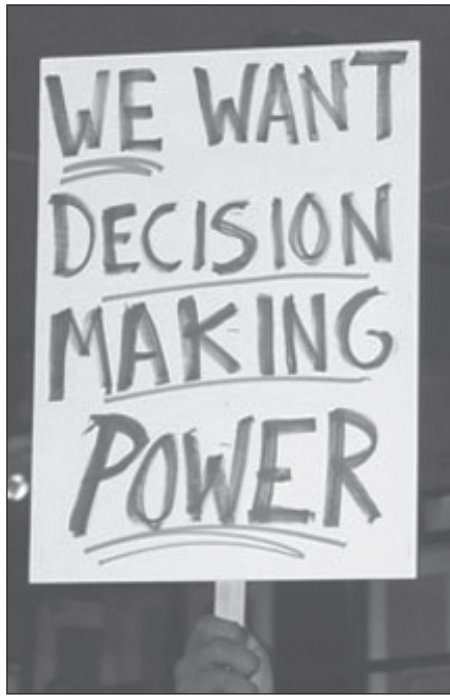
Funding the process means all candidates have equal time in the media to present their views and negative mudslinging and character assassination is not permitted. It means organizing many more public debates and public meetings organized to inform the public and requiring equal time for all to present their platform for solving social problems, like poverty, environmental devastation and war and peace. It means developing a process that would enable working people to present their own candidates from among their peers who would have an *equal* chance of winning. Taking steps in this direction would block the role of the rich in manipulating the elections while expanding and occupying the space for politics and candidates that serve the people.

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REPUBLICAN MAJORITY

Dysfunction, Extremes and More Executive Rule

The Republicans secured a majority in the Senate and also gained seats in the House, where they now have a 244-184 majority, up from 234 (seven seats are still undecided). The majority in the Senate is not enough to block filibusters (60) or vetoes (67). That in the House is also not enough to overcome a veto by the president (291). Thus, whatever legislation may get passed because of Republican majorities in both houses, Obama can veto them. This in turn provides greater justification for executive action. This would be true especially in matters Obama has already said were matters of national security, such as debt-ceiling votes, war funding, etc. Given that a main feature of governing arrangements today is further concentrating power in the hands of the presidency, the Republican majority may well further facilitate this direction.



A change in majority in the Senate does not limit the president's ability to take executive action. And given that votes commonly split among Democrats and Republicans, as has been occurring, it remains to be seen what legislation will actually get passed. Given the existing broad anger with government and Congress, continued gridlock could further facilitate the ability of the president to justify the need for executive rule. At least then "something" could be accomplished. Obama has already shown his readiness to do just that, bombing Syria and continuing aggressive efforts at regime change there without Congressional authorization.

In general, there is little reason to expect Congress to become more functional in the coming period, as conflicts within the ruling circles and their representatives in Congress continue to intensify. This is evident from comments by Texas Senator Ted Cruz, who said he will challenge the leadership of Senator Mitch McConnell — who won his election and is expected to lead the new Republican majority. As already seen, even with a sizeable majority in the House the past two years, Republicans were often not able to pass their own legislation.

It is possible Obama and a bloc of Republicans and Democrats, led by McConnell and Democrat Reid, will join together to secure further anti-social attacks, such as those against Medicare and Social Security. The next debt-ceiling debate, for example, coming up in March 2015, could be such an arena. There could be an effort to target "extremes" in both parties and bring forward a bloc that together imposes the cuts. Similarly the sequester budget cuts are due in January and may be another arena for such moves — which will likely be done in the name of

"bipartisanship" and overcoming gridlock in Congress. Most tea party Republicans were eliminated in the primaries so those elected are more likely to follow McConnell and those that remain are more vulnerable as "extreme" targets. Obama can use the so-called mandate of the elections to demand that Democrats submit and similarly target those who refuse as "extreme." The elimination of such "extremes" will be seen as the way to end gridlock. In fact, it will be the means to impose yet more vicious anti-social attacks.

A change in majority in the Senate will not eliminate the problem of Congressional dysfunction because the source lies elsewhere. The ruling circles have put in place arrangements of governance of executive rule, greatly undermining the power of Congress and effectively rendering it a consultative body at best.

The parties no longer function as political parties but rather as gangster-like cartels, constantly at each other's throats. Private interests, concentrating power in fewer hands while fiercely vying with each other for more power, have directly taken over public institutions. In doing so they have attempted to eliminate the concept of government for the public good. It is a vehicle in their private hands to guarantee only their narrow private interests. This includes securing the entire public treasury, public pensions, public lands and buildings, like public schools, and so forth. To whatever degree Congress, or legislatures at any level, stand in the way of such maneuvering, their powers will and are being curtailed and executive rule consolidated.

The danger that presents is not the Republican majority but rather the strengthening of this executive power and the continued elimination of the public, and the public good, from governance. This direction is very dangerous, as the violence, chaos and anti-social character of the Obama administration has already shown, abroad and at home. An increase in executive rule means an even more anti-democratic, anti-people and anti-planet direction. It is a danger to the peoples here and abroad and must be the target of fierce opposition.

Blocking this anti-democratic direction demands stepping up the fight to build independent politics of empowerment. It means organizing to oppose executive dictate and demand decision making of, by and for the people themselves as we together defend the rights of all. A democracy of our own making that puts the rights of all, abroad and at home, at the center is the battle of today. *No to Executive Rule! Yes to People's Empowerment!*

Oppose the Democrats and Republicans! Take a Stand for Independent Politics of People's Empowerment!

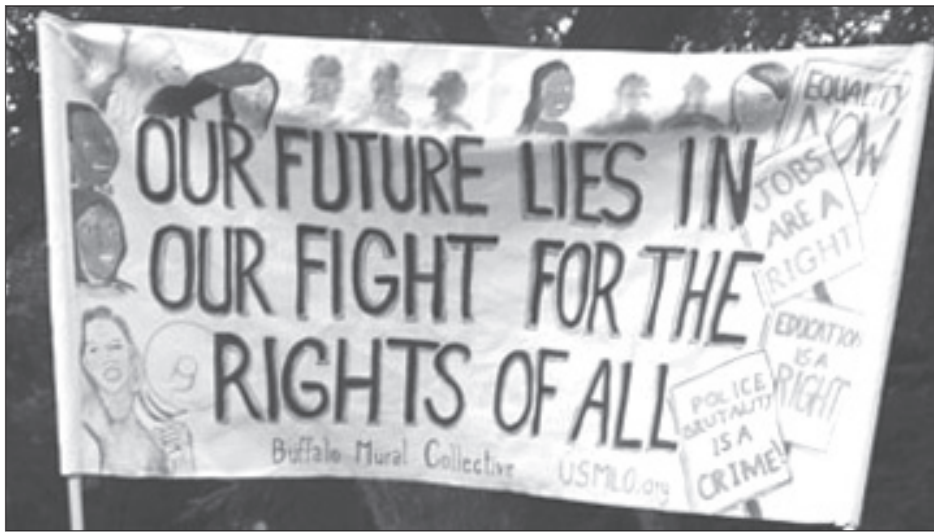
Statement of the U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization, November 3, 2014

On November 4, elections for Congress, governors and state legislatures will be taking place. All 435 members of the federal House of Representatives and one third of the Senate are up for election, and similar elections occur at the state level. Governors in 36 states are also up for election, including most of the states in the south and Midwest as well as New York and California.

The federal election is being presented as one of “control” of the Senate, given Republicans currently have a 234-seat majority in the House and are expected to keep that and add some seats. Republicans need to gain six seats and lose none to win a Senate majority. Democrats currently have a 53-seat majority, to 45 for Republicans and two independents, Angus King of Maine and Bernie Sanders of Vermont. Both independents now usually vote with Democrats but King has said he may switch. As well a third independent, in Kansas, Greg Orman, may win.

What has been left out in all the focus on “control” of the Senate is the fact that Congress has been dysfunctional not because Republicans have a majority in the House and Democrats a majority in the Senate but rather because both parties no longer function as political parties and power has increasingly been concentrated in the presidency. The Republicans, even with their 234-seat House majority, often could not get their own bills passed because of the factions vying for power within their own ranks. Similarly the Senate often could not act, as Democrats would split. Republican Senator Cruz of Texas is already saying that there will be increased contention in the Senate if Republicans win a majority, including a battle over who will lead the Senate.

The reality is the parties now function as mafia-style cartels contending with each other and loyal to the private monopoly interests that back them. It is not party machinery that is primarily responsible for funding and winning elections but rather Super PACS and other outside forces — funded by mega donors from among the monopoly



billionaires. They pick and choose individual candidates. And whether they carry the Republican or Democratic label, they all have the same pro-war, anti-social agenda. The numerous majority votes for war in Congress are but one example of this.

In this election there is also a growing readiness to split with the

Democrats and Republicans and back independent candidates. The talk of blocking Republican control of the Senate is in part meant to spread fear among the many working people angered with the pro-war, anti-social stand of Obama and Democrats. These voters are ready to break with Democrats and looking to develop alternative, independent politics of the people. The claim that this would mean a “catastrophe” of Republican “control” of the Senate is meant to spread fear and block this direction. It is a means to safeguard rule by the rich and further their anti-people agenda.

Voice of Revolution urges people to instead stick with their own independent thinking about how to participate in the election in a manner consistent with their conscience and the stands taken everyday to affirm their rights and oppose the anti-social offensive of the rich. Teachers, healthcare workers and many others are standing to defend the public interest and reject demands that are pro-war, anti-people and anti-planet, as the massive People's Climate March in New York City showed.

Refuse to vote for Democrats or Republicans. Use the elections to build up the independent politics of people's empowerment. Back third party and independent candidates who stand for such politics. Write-in your own name or those of your peers as an expression of your refusal to back candidates who are pro-war and anti-people. The issue is not which party of the rich has a majority in the Senate. It is defending the public interest by building independent politics of empowerment of the people. The control needed is control — decision making — by the people themselves and politicians of the rich will never deliver that. It is up to us to do so!

I • Public Schools are a Public Good

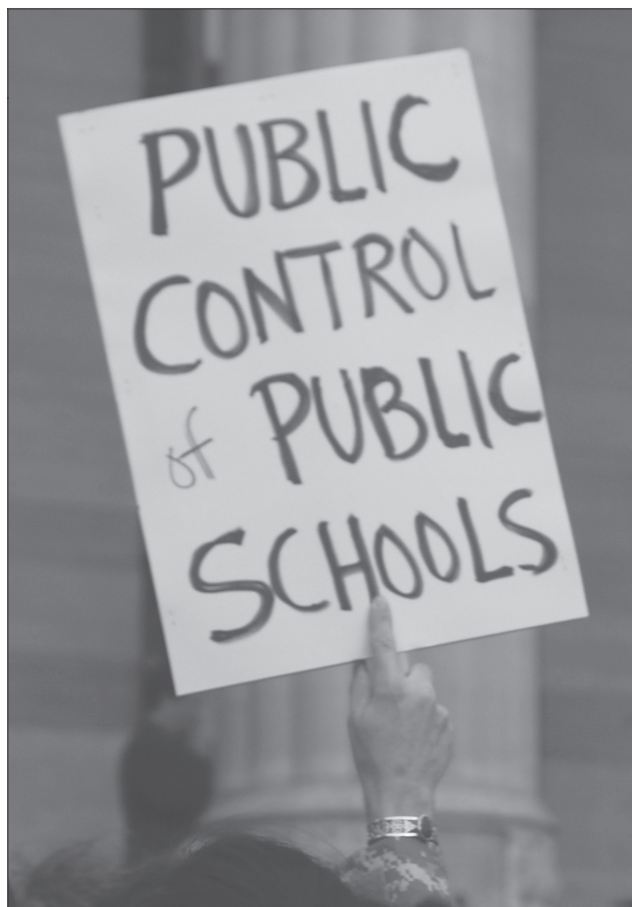
privately run but publicly funded charter schools, claiming they would introduce competition into the K-12 school system. Clearly they are one of the means he has in mind for dismantling the system of public education. He already forced New York City to provide free space in public school buildings for charters and provided special funding for them in the state budget.

The entire language being used is that of public schools as a business, with the right to education and government responsibility to guarantee this right eliminated. Far from fully funding public education — including the billions the state currently owes, by law, to the public schools, Cuomo is organizing to starve them further. The state is actively organizing, especially in Buffalo, to take over public schools and hand them over to private interests. This includes some of the oldest, most well-known and loved buildings like that of Lafayette High School and Bennett High School.

Providing the right to education equally for all is not a matter of “competition” or “monopolies.” Public education is not a business, it is a social necessity and responsibility. It is a matter of rights and the public good. That content, of social responsibility and defending rights is completely absent from Cuomo’s comments. His plans are targeted at eliminating this content and replacing it with a business model and language — like competition, “incentives,” and monopolies.

Cuomo’s language echoes that of former Florida Governor and potential 2016 presidential candidate Jeb Bush, who said public schools are “government-run monopolies run by unions.” And of course he has nothing to say against the real monopolies actually harming education, like Microsoft and Walmart, which instead are praised for being involved in education “reform.” That is, in eliminating the system of public schools and public governance.

As a further indication that Cuomo is also acting to bust the teacher’s unions, he said he will make changing the teacher evaluation system a priority. He repeated the anti-teacher lie that teachers do not want to be evaluated, when in fact they regularly organize to improve the ways and means to evaluate both their teaching and students’ learning. What teachers, students and parents alike do reject is the Common Core and its



testing and evaluation regime. These have shown themselves to be arbitrary, unfair and illegitimate. Instead of adhering to the majority view of teachers, students and parents statewide, including increasing numbers refusing to take the tests, Cuomo wants to make the requirements even more “rigorous.” He wants to increase “incentives” — merit pay, something long discredited — and impose more sanctions against teachers.

According to the *Daily News* report, Cuomo said, “I believe these kinds of changes are probably the single best thing that I can do as governor that’s going to matter long-term to break what is in essence one of the only remaining public monopolies — and that’s what this is, it’s a public monopoly.” He added, “The teachers don’t want to do the evaluations and they don’t want to do rigorous evaluations — I get it. I feel exactly opposite.”

Cuomo is no doubt aware that rigorous can be defined as being strict, severe, rigidly harsh, and inflexible — not content most would use when striving to educate students and evaluate their progress and that of teachers. The Common Core testing regime evaluates teachers based on student test scores using a test that has been shown to be anti-education, developmentally inappropriate and designed to have students, teachers and whole schools fail. It is a mechanism to “bust up the public school monopoly.” It is designed to eliminate public schools as a public system, to remove the public from governance of the schools, and to eliminate teacher unions. This is why teachers are rejecting it, while Democrat Cuomo, and his Wall Street financiers, are backing it.

Buffalo teachers set an example by refusing to support Cuomo in the elections and instead the Buffalo Teachers Federation endorsed Green Party candidate Howie Hawkins. Teachers, parents and students together are organizing to build their independent politics, by refusing the tests, organizing their own forums to inform and discuss the issues, and intervening in the elections to defend the right to education and break with the Democrats. They are continuing these efforts now after the elections by working to unite all concerned to further build the independent politics of people’s empowerment and provide the organizational forms necessary for this.

Tenure Is a Civil Rights Issue

Curmudgucation Blog, October 26, 2014

I am going to try once again to lay out how the people who insist that getting rid of teacher tenure is a great leap forward for civil rights get things exactly backwards.

First, it is not even close to impossible to fire bad teachers.

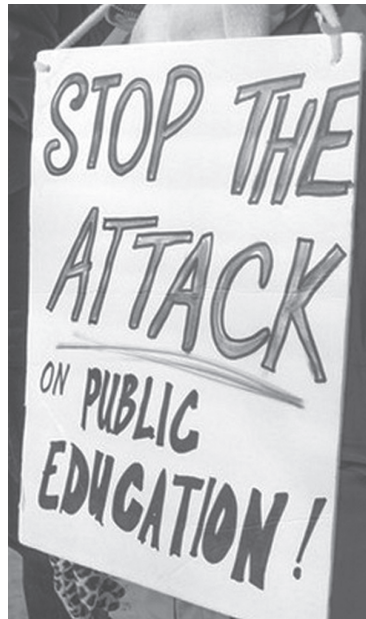
Do you want to fire bad teachers? Okay — how will you identify them, and just how bad do they have to be in order to be fire-worthy? How many people have to agree that they are bad? Remember, in the Vergara, California case (which eliminated teacher tenure) one student's example of a terrible teacher who did not deserve tenure was a woman who was named Teacher of the Year in her district.

The “solution” proposed by reformer types is to define teacher effectiveness (teacher goodness or the lack thereof) by looking at how well students learned. But “how well students learned” really means “how well students scored on the big state tests.”

Keep in mind that the Big State Tests often test only math and reading. Do you think you can judge the quality of an eleventh grade physical education teacher by the tenth graders' scores on a reading test?

Also keep in mind that multiple studies show that scores on those tests correlate directly to the amount of poverty in a school. Poor, urban, and/or minority students will predictably score lower on the big state tests, which means whoever teaches them will automatically pull low evaluation scores, which means volunteering to teach in high-poverty schools is volunteering to have a low (and potentially fire-worthy) effectiveness score. What do you think would be the best way to recruit teachers for those jobs?

But are there not “Value Added Measure” formulas that can correct for all that? The short answer is, no, there are not. There is not a shred of evidence that those formulas do what they are supposed to, and plenty of evidence that they do not.



Which means that, despite all the noise about tenure repeal reform being a civil rights issue, the types of due process derailing being promoted will (by design or not) directly attack the quality of the teaching staffs in the schools that can least withstand these attacks. Linking teacher job security and pay to student test scores makes it harder to recruit and retain teachers for the urban schools already socked in by poverty and suffering from the instability that comes from steady staff churn.

These are also the schools in which teachers have to fight for their students, and fight hard, for everything from getting books for the classroom to speaking up about big-district policies that are unfair to the students, policies created and implemented by leaders who could not find their way to the school in question unless it was with a chauffeur and a GPS.

You build up any school by recruiting and retaining teachers, by building a staff that provides stability and security for the students there. You do not recruit teachers for high-poverty, low-achievement classroom jobs by saying, “Come work here. We will chase you out the first time we get the chance, or the first time you annoy us.” You recruit and retain teachers by saying, “We are investing in you for the long haul. We will work with you if you need help, and we will give you the support you need to do the job. We have got your back, and we are committed to you for the long haul. We promise that, barring actual malpractice, you will keep this job as long as you wish, even when we find you annoying. We hope you will think of this school as your home for decades to come.”

You build up any school by committing to a relationship with the people who work there, not by letting them know that you will only keep them around as long as they are useful to you. If you want to protect the civil rights of the poor and minority students in this country, you protect the rights of their teachers.

Why Not Talk About Teacher Retention?

To hear some folks talk about tenure, you would think that one of the biggest issues facing education is a glut of teachers, a veritable mountain of wrinkled old classroom geezers blocking the career paths of a million Bright Young Things who are itching to get into the classroom. Oh, if only tenure did not allow them to sit there in lumpen uselessness while hot young blood congeals somewhere else, unused potential unrealized.

All the way back to She Who Will Not Be Named and her *Time* cover appearance, broom in hand, the prevailing image has been

of the need to sweep away the tenure-protected deadwood. It is a compelling image — it is just not closely related to reality.

The Economic Policy Institute thinks we don't even have enough teaching jobs. By their count, we should have 377,000 more job openings, which I am pretty sure would take care of every enthusiastic twenty-something who is allegedly languishing somewhere.

On top of that, we are losing somewhere in the neighborhood of a half million teachers each year. Everybody likes to quote the

two most striking data points — fifty percent of new teachers leave within five years, and twenty percent of new teachers leave within the first three years. Recently Teach for America (TFA) made the argument that their two-year teachers stay in a classroom longer than most traditional teacher school graduates. That may or may not be accurate, but it is certainly close enough to give one pause. Meanwhile, I can report first-hand that many college education programs are shriveling up and, if not outright dying, becoming shambling zombie shadows of their former selves.

This report from April highlights some of the trends. The teacher force is very female, and very white. In other words, the teacher population looks less and less like the student population. And there is no good news to report there, either. Black men are entering the profession in huge numbers and leaving it in even huger numbers.

And into this picture we have Silicon Valley moguls telling us that the problem with education is that we cannot fire people.

You will occasionally hear a stat thrown around along the lines of “Last year in North Pennsylvucky, only twelve teachers were fired out of sixty gabbillion employed in the state.” This is supposed to alarm us with the slackitude of schools’ firing skills, and serve as proof that zillions of terrible teachers are still in the classroom, lazily tenured and blissfully unfired. This is baloney. I will admit that when I entered teaching, it was a field where a lazy person could hide and while away the time until retirement. But that was thirty-some years ago; today teachers have to slog away just to keep their heads above water. The high attrition rate for beginning teachers tells me that many young men and women are saying, “Damn — this is hard work that I do not think I can do very well. I am outta here!” I believe a huge number of not-so-awesome proto-teachers are showing themselves the door before anybody else has to.

Why else are we hemorrhaging teachers? In the study given above, Richard Ingersoll wrote this:

“In short, the data suggest that school staffing problems are rooted in the way schools are organized and the way the teaching occupation is treated and that lasting improvements in the quality and quantity of the teaching workforce will require improvements in the quality of the teaching job.”

In other words, making teaching jobs crappier and less secure is not likely to get people to stick around.

New York City schools played with the tenure thing, creating a sort of tenure twilight. Some folks thought a study of the system proved that you could get weaker teachers to go away on their own. I am pretty sure that it proved you could get any teachers to go away if you told them they had no job security in their present location.

Everything — everything — tells us that if our goal really is to put a great teacher in every classroom, reformsters, educational thought leaders, and rich unelected amateurs who somehow get to set education policy are going about it exactly backwards. The attacks on tenure are literally the exact opposite of what is needed.

Of course, if the actual goal is to give schools a labor force that is cheaper and more easily controlled, then we are right on track. If we are trying to manufacture a staffing crisis so that we can say that we must issue emergency teaching credentials to all sentient beings in America, then we are on the right track. If we are trying to chase teachers away from large urban districts so that those districts (and their big beautiful piles of money) can be divvied up by charter privateers, we are on the right track.

But if we want to talk about improving the teaching force, about making it better resemble the student population, about putting great teachers in front of all students — if we want to talk about those things, then we need to stop talking about tenure and start talking about retention. What people actually choose to talk about tells us a great deal about their actual goals. (curmudgucation.blogspot.com)

Students and Teachers Oppose Attacks on Philadelphia’s Public Schools

As students and teachers in New York and elsewhere content with state efforts to take over public schools, they are joined by those in Philadelphia who are fighting increased attacks on their rights. Philadelphia already has experienced a state takeover and formation of what is called the School Reform Commission (SRC), a state appointed board that runs the city’s public schools. It also saw many public schools closed and then turned over to privately controlled charters, with 67 now operating in the city.

On October 6, the SRC simply ripped up the contract with teachers and imposed big increases in healthcare costs (see p.13). The action was taken quickly and widely opposed by the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT). The 15,000 teachers and staff went years without a raise, and took up job functions of positions cut entirely from schools, like administrators, nurses, counselors and librarians.

Following the SRC’s elimination of the contract, on Wednesday October 8 students went to school but did not go to class in solidarity with their teachers. Remaining outside with signs and chants, they opposed efforts to blame teachers and divide them from students and parents. Students rejected claims by SRC Chairman Bill Green that teachers have not sacrificed enough and must accept yet more cuts. Students also organized a sit-in and shouted down efforts by the SRC to show the anti-public school, pro-private charter film “Won’t Back Down.” They chanted *Philly is a Union Town, Hey Hey, Ho, Ho the SRC Has Got to Go* and *Full Funding Now* and succeeded in preventing the showing of the film.

The film was produced by billionaire Philip Anschutz and depicts a parent and a teacher acting to turn their public school over to a private charter operator. The teachers’ union is falsely

portrayed as the problem and obstacle to quality education. Anschutz produced “Waiting for Superman,” another anti-teacher and anti-public film. He is a major player in the fracking industry, which is huge in Pennsylvania and causing great harm to the human and natural environment.

Teachers, parents and students also organized a sit in outside Governor Corbett’s Philadelphia office October 9. One protester demanded to make a citizen’s arrest of Corbett and was instead herself arrested. Then on October 10 teachers organized demonstrations outside their schools, spreading the word with the hashtag #TurnUpForTruth to emphasize the disinformation and dirty politics behind the SRC’s decisions to cancel PFT’s contract.

Teachers and students are demanding full funding now and

the elimination of the appointed SRC in favor of a local elected school board. They are also opposing expansion of private charters. Various studies, like one by Stanford have shown that most charters perform the same or worse than public schools and also engage in far more fraud and theft of public funds. Stanford’s study did a national comparison of charter students with those in demographically similar nearby public schools. The study showed 46 percent of charters did the same as public schools, 37 percent did worse and only 17 percent did better. As the protests in Philly show, attacking public schools, removing the public from governance and continually expanding privately run charter schools is no solution. Defending the right to education and modernizing public schools through modernizing their governance, so that students, teachers and parents decide, is the way forward.

Interview with Philadelphia Student Organizer Defending Public Education

EduShyster Blog

When the Philadelphia School District decided to hold a “parent engagement” night featuring a showing of the charter happy, parent trigger movie “Won’t Back Down,” members of the Philadelphia Student Union showed up, sat down and would not get up [chanting loud enough to stop the film]. I spoke with new member Ruby Anderson about the students’ vision for public education in Philadelphia and what she would say to reform advocates if given the chance.



EduShyster: Give us a little background. What is the Philly Student Union and why do you keep showing up at places where you are not invited?

Ruby Anderson: We’re students who all go to Philly public schools. It’s a very diverse group. Some of us go to charters, some go to neighborhood schools, some go to magnets. It’s pretty simple. We want to ensure equal access to education for everyone. When you’re putting something that should be a public good into the hands of private interests via massive charterization that is not going to give equal access. The main things we’re fighting for right now is a democratically elected school board, which Philadelphia doesn’t have, and a fairer funding formula in Pennsylvania.

EduShyster: It sounds as though things have been heating up there lately.

Anderson: Basically since Governor Corbett has been in office he’s cut \$1 billion from education and because of that the school district has had to take austerity measures to make sure that schools can actually be open. On top of this, the Philadelphia School Reform Commission or the SRC won’t take the measures necessary to ensure that our schools can get the funding we need. They’ve repeatedly

failed to understand the real problems in the Philly schools. For example, they take the position that it’s the teachers who need to make sacrifices in order to fund the schools. But teachers are the most essential part of our education. Does it really make sense to ask them to bear the majority of the burden? You should know that the SRC isn’t popular in Philadelphia, and a lot of people blame them for really messing up the education system here in the 15 years that they’ve been in charge.

EduShyster: But if the teachers were really putting students first instead of just thinking selfishly about themselves, wouldn’t they work for free?

Anderson: That’s more or less the way the SRC sees it, but teachers also have to live. In order to take care of other people, you also have to make sure that you’re taken care of. Do we really want our teachers to spend all of their time worrying about putting food on the table or how they’re going to pay for their child’s college education? I have one teacher who, now, because

he has to pay into his health insurance plan is no longer going to be able to afford to send his kids to preschool.

EduShyster: I happen to know quite a few education reform types, including some who advocate converting Philadelphia to an all charter district. Do you have any messages you would like me to pass along?

Anderson: Stop treating education as a business instead of a system that is held up by human beings. Every time they talk about cuts or austerity, it's not just funds that are being cut but students. Every time a school loses a counselor, it means fewer kids get the resources they need to apply to college. Every time a school loses a nurse that means more students who have to go to the hospital, and their parents have to pay that bill, rather than having a nurse who can treat them there. There's a human cost to all of this.

EduShyster: This week, a group of you decided to go to the movies together. What did you see?

Anderson: The school district decided to have a special

parent's appreciation movie night and show "Won't Back Down," an anti-union, pro-charter film, funded by the same people behind "Waiting for Superman." It's pretty obvious that in the wake of canceling the teachers' union contract, showing this movie was just a shady ploy to manipulate parents into supporting school privatization. Twenty minutes into the film, we took off our regular shirts—we had our Philly Student Union shirts on underneath—and we marched to the front of the room and had a sit-in in front of the movie screen. Not everyone was happy about that.

EduShyster: I was very happy about it. In fact, groups like the Philly Student Union give me a lot of hope, even if they do cause me to reflect upon the somewhat lower-performing days of my own high school experience. Any thing those of us outside of Philadelphia can do to support your efforts?

Anderson: Share our stories. That really helps a lot.

(Ruby Anderson is a senior at the Science Leadership Academy in Philadelphia and a member of the Philly Student Union.)

Philadelphia Federation of Teachers Seeking a Fair Contract

PFT President Jerry Jordan, October 16, 2014

School Reform Commission (SRC) Chairman Bill Green is not telling the truth.

As we have learned, the SRC has been planning its ambush of Philadelphia's educators since the beginning of the summer. Part of the SRC's strategy was to promote a major lie about the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers' (PFT) unwillingness to accept proposals that would ease the School District's budget crisis. In fact, the PFT has been — and remains — the only party interested in negotiating a fair contract.

The last proposals put on the table were from the PFT in July. The district canceled our next scheduled meeting and has yet to reschedule negotiations with the PFT. These are not the actions of an SRC that wants to negotiate in good faith.

Here is the truth: The PFT put \$24 million in savings on the table last year. The PFT also offered to forgo wage increases for one year, which would have saved an additional \$10 million. The district saved \$17 million last year when it took step and lane increases away from PFT members, another sacrifice foisted on Philly's educators by the SRC.

The SRC's suggestion that its proposals will cost PFT members a maximum of \$200 per month [for healthcare] is another disingenuous assertion. The truth is that PFT members who wish to provide coverage for their children and families would see premiums as high as \$626 per month if they choose to keep their existing coverage.

The district also seeks to take over PFT's Health and Welfare Fund. This takeover would prevent PFT retirees from receiving prescription benefits — which they pay for — from the fund. This could cost retired members as much as \$10,000 per year.

Though nothing close to the draconian terms the SRC is seeking to impose, the concessions offered by the union last year

would have required further sacrifice of PFT members, who are already paid 10 to 20 percent less than teachers in surrounding school districts. Unfortunately, the district is less interested in settling a contract than in getting its way and discrediting the union.

We offered our proposals last year in response to one of the worst financial crises we have ever seen. But simply squeezing more money from educators is no way to fund public education.

Lost in the story of yet another Philly labor-management conflict is the real issue of Governor Corbett's public education budgets, which have had the greatest impact on Philadelphia's schoolchildren. This is not anecdotal rhetoric. In an address to the Philadelphia Bar Association on October 9, Michael Masch, a former state budget secretary, pointed out that in 2011-12, funding for the School District of Philadelphia — the largest district in Pennsylvania — was cut by 20 percent, even as the other 499 districts in the commonwealth received an increase of 4 percent.

Clearly, the SRC, which is controlled by Corbett, will not highlight these facts. Parents, educators, and taxpayers should be outraged that SRC Chairman Green and Superintendent William R. Hite Jr. are willing to allow Corbett to shirk his duty to adequately fund public schools, while continuing to point the finger at and demand more from the educators who already spend thousands of their own dollars every year to buy classroom supplies that the district doesn't provide. Meanwhile, the district creates more educator turnover and increases the costs that come with a lack of stability in our schools. The SRC's actions against educators, and the lies used to justify them, confirm another truth: After 14 years of failure, the SRC must be abolished.

Study Shows Chicago Charter Schools Underperform Their Traditional Counterparts

Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity (IMO) at the University of Minnesota Law School

A new study by the Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity (IMO) at the University of Minnesota Law School showed that charter schools in Chicago underperform comparable traditional public schools and are more highly segregated by race. The analysis used comprehensive data for Chicago schools in 2012-13 and controlled for the mix of students and other challenges faced by individual schools. The findings, consistent with previous IMO evaluations of charter schools in the Twin Cities using similar data and methods, showed that:

- Reading and math **pass** rates in Chicago charters lagged behind those in traditional public schools by up to four percent. Reading and math **growth** rates in charters trailed traditional schools by roughly four percent. Charter school **graduation** rates lagged by even greater amounts. There were, for the most part, no statistically significant differences between charter and traditional schools in ACT test scores. The findings actually understate the performance gap. Because students self-select into the charter system, student performance should exceed what one sees in traditional schools, even if charters do no better at teaching their students.

Charters are much less likely to be racially or ethnically diverse. Only 7 percent of charters showed some degree of ethnic diversity — in the form of schools with mixed black and Latino student populations — compared to about 20 percent of traditional schools that showed either racial or ethnic diversity.

After controlling for school characteristics, Chicago School District selective schools and schools for gifted students outperform charter and traditional schools on most measures, while magnet school students perform much like their traditional school counterparts. All three school types are more likely to be racially diverse than charter and traditional schools.

“The question is whether charters are the best path available to find ways to better serve low-income students and students of color, given that this approach has failed to improve overall student performance by most measures and led to less racial and ethnic diversity in the city’s schools,” said Myron Orfield, director of the Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity.

The study argues that these negative findings mean it is time to reevaluate where the Chicago school system is headed. It recommends that:

- The Chicago Public School District institute a three-year moratorium on new charter schools and campuses and complete an impact study on how charter school policy has affected the



district as a whole.

- The State Charter School Commission be eliminated and policy and control decisions be returned to local authorities who are vested with the education of students in their jurisdiction.

- The State remove the provision from the charter school law that exempts campus expansions from the charter school cap.

- Measures be implemented to ensure that charter schools do not deepen racial segregation.

- The training required of school board members be expanded to include research-based review of the potential effects of charters on segregation and student performance.

- More detailed information and reporting requirements be required of charter applicants regarding their performance in existing schools.

- Stricter reporting standards be instituted for charters, matching those for traditional schools.

- Existing and proposed charters provide more detailed descriptions of the education practices or innovations they use to improve student performance.

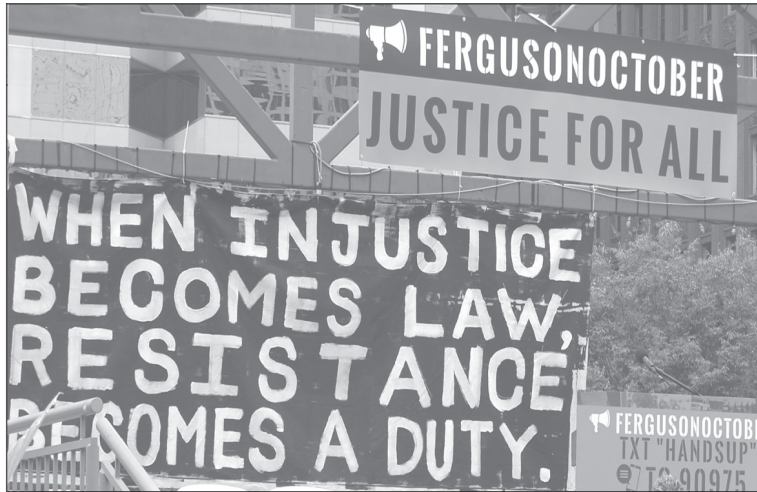
- Charters be required to document continuing success in order to keep their charter.

For more information about the report, contact Myron Orfield at (612) 625-7976 (orfield@umn.edu) or Thomas Luce at (612) 625-5344 (tluce@umn.edu). The report is available at: www.law.umn.edu/metro.

(The Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity (IMO) was established in 1993 as the Institute on Race and Poverty. IMO investigates the ways that laws, policies and practices affect development patterns in U.S. metropolitan regions, with a particular focus on the growing social and economic disparities within these areas.)

Ferguson Actions Oppose State Organized Racist Attacks and Demand Justice Now

Actions in Ferguson, Missouri October 10-13 continued the unrelenting resistance of Ferguson youth, joined by workers, students and organizers from across the country. The three days of actions were well-organized, mainly by local youth. They brought to the fore the determined demand for *Justice Now!* — for Michael Brown, unarmed African American youth with his hands in the air, gunned down by police



August 9 — and all unarmed youth killed by police. Regular actions at the Ferguson police station, St. Louis City Hall and elsewhere have occurred every day since the killing.

October 10 saw a demonstration targeting the St. Louis County Court House and District Attorney McCulloch, demanding that he be removed. He has so far not indicted Officer Darren Wilson who killed Brown. The Grand Jury, with only one African American, is under investigation for corruption and may not announce a decision until January 2015.

Protesters opposed government abuse of power and defended their right to resist. They condemned McCulloch for his systematic failure to indict police who have killed unarmed black men in the area. In 2000, for example, two black men were killed by police. Officers claimed the two had resisted arrest, shot at them, and were attempting to run them over with a car. The claim was made despite the men being unarmed and the vehicle being immobile. McCulloch did not get an indictment. Protesters also marched on the Ferguson police station in the evening.

October 11 saw a demonstration bringing thousands together from across the country to stand against police killings and racist state attacks, demanding *Justice for All Now!* Sizeable delegations from Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Memphis and Los Angeles — including a large number of Palestinians — joined those from St. Louis and elsewhere in denouncing police terror and government racism. Evening actions included a sit-in at a gas station and marching on the Ferguson police station.

October 12-13 saw a late-night march to the University of Washington in St. Louis, with about 1,000 people demonstrating at the campus with students joining in the sit-in. A number of actions took place across the city October 13, including shutting down three Walmarts, starting with the one in Ferguson. These actions were in unity with those in Ohio opposing the

killing of unarmed African American John Crawford in a Walmart there. As well, there were actions at City Hall and the Ferguson police station holding government to account; at a fundraiser for a Democratic candidate where Senator Claire McCaskill was present; and banners were unfurled at a St. Louis Rams game affirming that Black Lives Matter. A number of arrests occurred but demonstrators continued undaunted, as

they have since August 9.

Organizers on the ground report that protests are on going since October 13, in Ferguson and St. Louis. Youth have affirmed that they will persist and they continue to reject the many police and government actions aimed at silencing them and diverting their resistance to government organized racist attacks. Many rightly characterize the actions of policing agencies, local, state, FBI and others, as a live military exercise. At times police are in “We are your best friend” mode, laid back, as they were October 11. Other times they are in full military gear with tear gas, pepper spray and automatic weapons. Others they are in riot gear, with their batons and shields, imposing many arrests, as occurred October 13. Such live exercises aim not only to repress resistance but also to train the police forces to work together under a single federal (or military) command, using various tactics, including violence and acting as an aggressive military force against peaceful protesters.

Ferguson youth are showing that despite these efforts by police to block resistance, they continue to find the ways and means to get even better organized and carry forward their just struggle. As the October actions, including the many signs and chants show, the massive outpouring of rage from people of all walks of life against the killing of Brown is an expression of the injustice, racism, state violence and political disenfranchisement faced by African American and national minorities everyday in the U.S. The people are organizing to end state-organized racism and police violence and impunity that leaves youth dead and police unpunished. They are rejecting U.S.-style democracy, with its racist core and culture of militarism. It is a failed democracy and its representatives, from the top down, necessarily fail when it comes to solving social problems. It is the youth and all those standing as one to defend rights that are providing solutions.

FERGUSON

Protests Planned for Justice for Michael Brown, Calls to Demilitarize Police

Don't Shoot Coalition

The Don't Shoot Coalition, a coalition of approximately 50 local organizations formed in the wake of the police shooting of Michael Brown, announced its plans in response to the anticipated Grand Jury announcement concerning possible criminal charges against Officer Darren Wilson. The coalition has been engaged in significant efforts with numerous community groups and leaders to plan for the anticipated announcement.

"If Officer Wilson is not indicted, we will do our part to try to de-escalate violence without de-escalating action" said Don't Shoot co-chair Michael T. McPhearson, executive director of Veterans For Peace. "We are providing a number of supports to promote a peaceful response, but nothing will make a difference unless the police do their part by giving protesters adequate space. That's the key to peaceful outcomes."

In an effort to ensure community members are able to exercise their constitutional right to assemble in a safe and intimidation-free environment, Don't Shoot members are attempting to negotiate three key elements to a safe police response. First, to come to agreement on rules of engagement for all involved police agencies to foremost value the safety of those protesting, including a de-militarized response (no armored vehicles, rubber bullets, rifles or tear gas).

Second, to provide advance public notice of the date of the announcement of the Grand Jury's decision so groups can prepare and direct people to productive actions. Finally, police must respect established sanctuary safe spaces as off-limits.

Throughout the protests since the shooting death of unarmed teenager Michael Brown on August 9, escalation has largely resulted from an intrusive police presence. When police have given protesters space, and allowed for self-policing, the actions have remained peaceful. "For nearly three months protest leaders have maintained the peace, with the only real incidents of conflict resulting solely from police engagement," said Montague Simmons, chair Organization for Black Struggle.

"If we see violence, make no mistake, the responsibility for it lies with law enforcement," said organizer and Don't Shoot member Damon Davis. "Since the day they left Michael Brown's body in the street for more than four hours, the government has failed to answer the cries of the public time and again. There has been no accountability or transparency. It's wrong to show that kind of the disregard for people's feelings and people react."

In addition to negotiating the conditions of response to any uprisings, the Don't Shoot Coalition is involved with providing an array of supports to protesters including jail support, trained

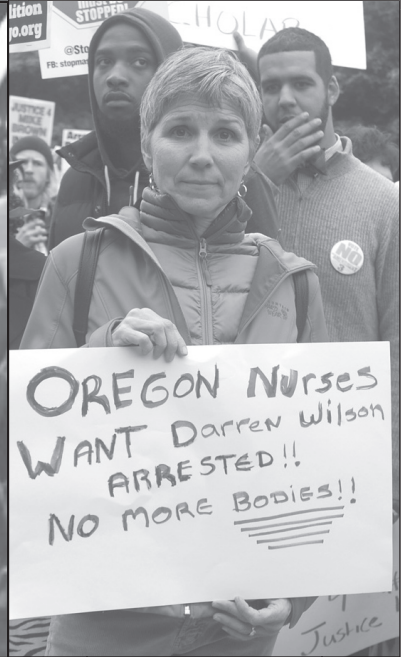


de-escalators, safe spaces for conversation and counseling in area faith institutions. Coalition members will also show dissent in the historic tradition of, non-violent direct action, as advocated by civil and human rights leaders around the world, including Mahatma Gandhi and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Coalition groups will take action throughout the St. Louis area as an effective non-violent means to advocate for change and encourage people in the region to participate.

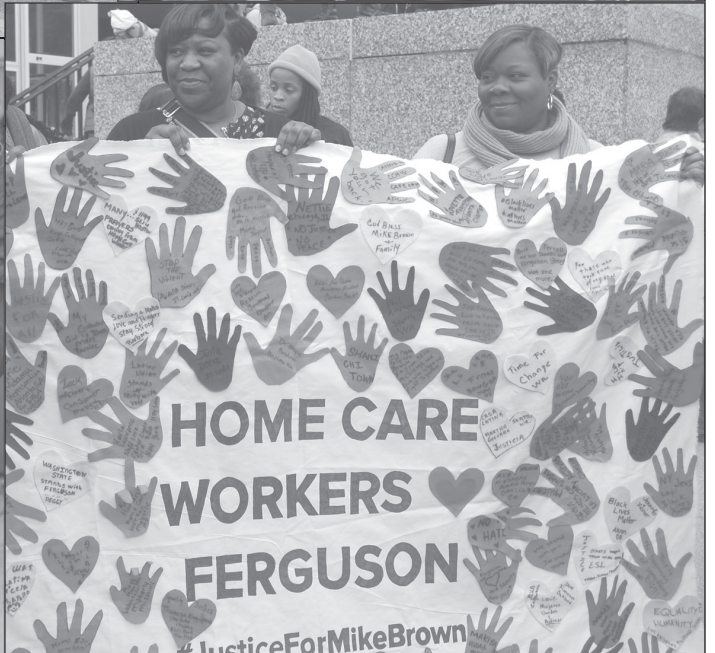
"There will be plenty of ways for people to join us in peaceful protest," said Don't Shoot co-chair and Advancement Project Senior Attorney Denise Lieberman. "This is an opportunity for everyone in the region to come together in our commitment to justice."

[Preparations are also going forward nationwide, on the basis of a call from Ferguson organizers for day after demonstrations whenever the grand jury issues its results. The government has leaked to the media the likelihood that there will not be an indictment from the Grand Jury. News items have also claimed the Justice Department will also not issue charges for civil rights violations. Both are no doubt trial balloons to test the waters and see what kind of resistance will emerge is there are no charges of any kind. People in the St Louis area are preparing for military-style actions by police while those elsewhere are also gearing up to defend rights and contend with police violence. What is clear is that whatever the government does in relation to bringing charges, the people will continue fighting for justice. As the stand taken in Ferguson emphasizes, when injustice is law, resistance is duty! — VOR Ed.]

FERGUSON OCTOBER ACTIONS



SUPPORT RESISTANCE IN FERGUSON



FERGUSON OCTOBER ACTIONS



20 • Shooting in Canada

into action as if they were conducting an exercise in bringing the whole city under their direct control. Schools were shut down, all government buildings in the downtown area were shut down. No one could go in or out. At 6 pm, some government workers were still locked down at work. The outlying government buildings were evacuated and shut. All bridges going to the Quebec side were blocked by the QPP and RCMP and every driver was forced to open the trunk of their car which was searched before they were allowed to cross.

The entire center of the city was brought to a standstill and the media assisted in spreading hysteria by stopping their regular programming and reporting all kinds of unsubstantiated rumors about other gunmen in other locations and incidents of gunfire which were later denied by the police. All during the day the media outlets uniformly reported that there was still an active search by police for other suspected terrorists. The main content of the reports was that people in Ottawa still faced a dangerous situation. The reports from the media continue to insist that police are “actively searching” for other terrorists and that the situation is still not safe.

The security services also disrupted cell phone service during the day -- this was not announced but clearly it was to test the technology to monitor and disrupt any communications by cell phones. The purpose of this activity was a dry run to iron out any problems that may exist in the security apparatus. It served to instill fear in people who could not reach family members and to justify the imposition of dictatorial powers, which violate basic human rights, and to eliminate any opposition to the warmongering positions of the Harper government. It also feeds the irrational racist ideology of Harper that the main threat to Canada is Islamicists and radicalized jihadists.

CPC(M-L) condemns this fraudulent and irresponsible activity of the government, which uses this kind of tragic circumstance to advance a pro-war agenda and impose dictatorial powers at home. It is a vivid example of the damaging activities of the state apparatus at all levels combined with the monopoly media, which are responsible for disrupting and terrorizing the whole city.

This evening Prime Minister Harper will make a nationally televised speech through which he is expected to disseminate more disinformation about “young jihadists” and the need to defend Canada’s “national interest.” This is accomplished according to him by supporting a military intervention in Iraq and the use of force to sort out problems in the Middle East and Central Asia, as well as in Europe proper and Canada itself.

A series of laws are presently before the Parliament to strengthen the ability of the government and undercover agencies to act

with impunity, further undermining the rule of law and the public authority in favor of the private monopoly interests the Harper government serves. All of these actions serve private interests in their takeover of duties that by right belong to the civil public domain — from the civil service, to police and security services to the armed forces and the functioning of political parties.

In this situation, all forces that stand for a socially responsible response to the unfolding events must urgently intervene in a rational manner by standing for principle while thinking things through. This means that while they uphold the rights of all and the rule of law, they also take a firm stand against arbitrariness and the use of violence and impunity in the name of high ideals.

This is especially needed at a time Canada has deployed its armed forces to bomb Iraq and is engaging in disinformation about ISIS, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, and “young jihadists.” The government’s actions and propaganda are meant to justify engaging in regime change in Syria and elsewhere.

Canadian actions in Iraq and Syria alongside those of the United States and big European powers will have similar results to what has occurred in Afghanistan, Iraq, Egypt and Libya, which are in a state of chaos and unending violence. Meanwhile, the Israeli Zionists with the backing of the same forces deployed throughout West and Central Asia and North Africa have committed grave crimes against humanity in their attempts to destroy the Resistance in Palestine.

Whatever explanations are offered to explain the so-called young jihadism, it is without doubt an integral part of the state of anarchy and violence imposed on the world by the U.S. imperialists and their allies, including Canada. It is all due to the striving of the big powers to take over the countries they want in the name of their “national interest” no matter what the consequences to others and the sacred cause of world peace.

In all of this, the people are being held hostage to government’s actions with impunity. In the name of opposing “jihadist extremism,” people are supposed to support anti-jihadist government extremism. CPC(M-L) opposes both the so-called jihadist and anti-jihadist extremist methods, which it considers versions of individual acts of terrorism and state terrorism. CPC(M-L) bases itself on mass ideological and political mobilization as the legitimate and necessary response to both individual acts of terror and the reactionary violence and state terror used by the U.S. imperialists and their Canadian allies to realize their striving for world domination and to suppress the resistance struggles of the peoples everywhere.

The forms of struggle advocated by CPC(M-L) are all based



on mass democracy — the participation of the working people, youth and students and all sections of the people in actions that affirm their economic, political, social and cultural rights against those who deprive them of the enjoyment of their rights. The revolutionary actions of the working people cannot be organized through acts of terrorism. Acts of individual terrorism and state terrorism are executed by individuals either alone or with state forces behind them -- none of these acts have any links whatsoever with the masses of the people. Such actions are enabled by the climate of anarchy and violence unleashed by the economic forces that have seized state power to push the neo-liberal agenda.

CPC(M-L) calls on Canadians to keep in mind that their

main defense is to continue to form public opinion in support of the peaceful resolution of conflicts amongst nations. They must oppose the use of force to sort out problems, and oppose big power interference in the internal affairs of other countries and the double standards. They must oppose the demonization of perceived enemies, the criminalization of opponents and the destruction of their legitimate organizations and due process in the name of high ideals.

CPC(M-L) calls attention to the anti-war actions this weekend and calls on people from all walks of life to join in and make their views known against the use of force to solve problems. All out to establish an anti-war government! Join in!

HARPER DICTATORSHIP'S SELF-SERVING ANTI-TERRORIST AGENDA

When Does a Group or an Individual Pose a Danger to Society?

Pauline Easton, TML Weekly

It is clear that there are a lot of people across the country who are very disturbed by recent events. Under such circumstances, it is not fruitful to incite passions and fuel tensions by presenting opinion as fact as the Prime Minister and his Ministers have done and continue to do, or to enact more legislation which is self-serving and destroys the standards and due process established by a civil society based on the Rule of Law, as the Prime Minister and his Ministers are planning to do. On the contrary, what needs to be done is to go into the heart of the matter and appeal to all people to draw warranted conclusions and unite on that basis. The issue is to focus on what will resolve the crisis in favor of the people and what will not. The outlook that upholds Might Makes Right and enacts legislation on a self-serving basis will not permit any problem to be sorted out. On the contrary, it exacerbates the problems which already exist. This is especially true when the outlook is racist and targets mentally ill and socially displaced people for attack in the name of high ideals.

In this context, the question has been raised of when a group or individual pose a danger to society. Linked to this is whether a group or individual have the right to preach whatever they wish. The answer is that while such a right does exist, nobody can have the right to violate the standards of human behavior achieved by society. If a society is to be considered truly democratic, merely holding or giving an opinion cannot be considered a crime. However, when an opinion is put into practice and turned into life, it has to be closely scrutinized, not only in accordance with the prevailing economic and political system but most importantly on the basis of the accepted human standards of behavior. For instance, should an individual hold an opinion that cannibalism is an expression of the highest form of civilized behavior and preach such an opinion, they are free to do so. And so too those who oppose such a view must be free to do so. But as soon as such an opinion is implemented, it becomes a crime, something which has been rejected by the established standards of human

behavior, judged according to the accepted norms which guarantee due process.

In this regard, the greatest danger to the society is not posed by individuals who commit crimes, because all the mechanisms are in place to bring them to trial and hold them to account. The greatest danger is posed when governments pass laws and endorse practices which permit ministers and security agencies to act with impunity, on the basis of arbitrariness, not Rule of Law. When such laws and practices go against the standards achieved by human beings and their society and in fact constitute crimes, despite the opinion of those who enact such laws that they do not, then society faces a serious problem.

The problem is that for governments to carry out their destructive activities, they confound fact and opinion. On this basis not of fact but of their opinion, they inflame passions and spread disinformation for self-serving purposes.

For instance, when speaking to Parliament on October 23, the day after the soldier was killed in Ottawa, Harper ignored the fact that the motivation behind the attacks is yet to be established and declared them to be terrorist:

“Mr. Speaker, with regard to the events of yesterday and in recent days, a number of questions remain and will all be answered over the course of the police security investigations.

“But I can tell the House this today: the objective of both of those attacks was to spread fear and panic in our country and to interrupt the business of government.”

He proceeded to treat his opinion as if it were fact to justify more legislation which suppresses the rights of the people:

“For that reason and with the belief and security that Canada is the government’s primary responsibility, we have over the years passed such legislation as the Combating Terrorism Act and the Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act to better protect Canadians and secure institutions.

“Last week, our Government proposed amendments to the legislation under which the Canadian Security Intelligence

Service operates.

“And as you know, Mr. Speaker, in recent weeks I’ve been saying that our laws and police powers need to be strengthened in the area of surveillance, attention and arrest.

“They need to be much strengthened and I assure you, Mr. Speaker, that work which is already underway will be expedited.”

News agency reports also corroborate that laws will be passed which take away the rights of citizens and residents on the basis of this unsubstantiated opinion presented as fact. The Canadian Press

points out the Conservatives are hinting that “more powers are needed to make pre-emptive arrests following deadly attacks on soldiers in Ottawa and St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Que.

“That would come in addition to long-planned legislation that would give the Canadian Security Intelligence Service more power to track terror suspects abroad and provide blanket identity protection for the agency’s human sources.”

CP points out that “Under existing provisions, leaving Canada to take part in terrorism abroad is a criminal offence.

“In addition, police have the power to make a preventive arrest of anyone suspected of planning a terrorist attack.

“They can also require people with information relevant to the investigation of a past or future terrorist act to appear before a judge.”

This shows how dangerous it is for a group or an individual who holds opinions to go beyond advocating that their view should be considered above everything else and instead turn this opinion into law. It violates the basic principles of democracy and poses grave dangers to society. Furthermore, past experience shows that the Canadian state and its agencies have more often than not been implicated in sting operations which have incited individuals to carry out acts that they themselves, on their own, would neither think of carrying out, nor have the means to carry out. The individuals are subsequently blamed for the attacks. The state then provides itself with justification for more repressive measures, saying it stopped many more attacks thanks to its actions.

This is what the Harper government is doing. It is already criminalizing the right to conscience and is planning to ban it outright. It shows that the government has itself become extremist. It justifies its actions on the basis of replacing facts with its own opinion, reverting to the medieval practices of defamation and outlawing individuals with whom it does not agree. Once an individual is declared an outlaw, he or she is “fair game” — that is, a target of attack.



Furthermore, it continues to uphold double standards. While condoning and practicing state terrorism in the name of the war on terror, it shouts loudly that it is for rights and democracy.

For instance, it is a matter of public record that the Harper government says it wants to stop “young jihadists” from committing terrorist acts. But in the name of defending democratic values, it does nothing to stop the approximately 145 Canadians enlisted in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), some 30 from Ontario alone, despite the fact that the IDF have com-

mitted heinous crimes against the people of Gaza. Instead, the Harper government calls anyone who supports the Palestinian Resistance anti-Semitic, which is a hate crime. It has defunded organizations which support humanitarian work in Palestine. People are asking whether it will now also imprison all those who hold political opinions in favor of those who wage resistance struggles all over the world? Will those who support the people of Venezuela, Cuba, Palestine and Syria who are fighting foreign interference and terrorism now also be called terrorists?

Opinions about this or that group or individual cannot replace hard facts. The hard facts show that it is the actions of the Harper government both at home and abroad which pose the greatest danger to society at this time. The individual right to conscience must be affirmed not violated. This goes hand in hand with taking firm stands against all those who instigate or organize violence. Everything has to be looked at according to its own merit. The Government of Canada must stop declaring that the violation of rights at home and of international law abroad makes Canadians safer. Its duty is to defend the rights of all. The conception that democratic liberties have reasonable limits which are then defined on a self-serving basis is not a modern conception or standard of behavior. Rights belong to the holder by virtue of being human. Those who trample them underfoot attack the very being of the targeted individuals, minorities and organizations and thus the very being of society itself.

The aim of legislation cannot be suppression at home and conquest abroad. This is why it is so important to take a bold stand in defense of the rights of all at this time. Let us unite all honest and sincere individuals and groups to bring about the renewal of the democratic institutions and process in a manner which upholds the rights of all and provides them with a guarantee. This is the way to guarantee the security of Canada and its peoples.

The Need to Oppose Terrorism on an Enlightened Basis

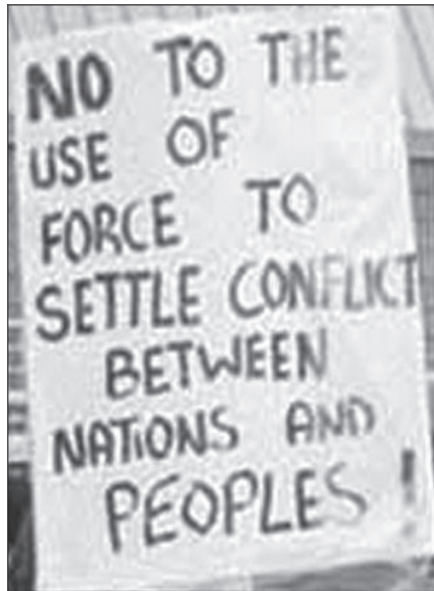
Enver Villamizar, TML Daily, Canada

On October 22, a reservist soldier from Hamilton was shot and killed while standing guard at the National War Memorial in downtown Ottawa. After shooting the soldier, the gunman headed to the Parliament where he seized a car, entered Parliament Hill's Center Block where he exchanged fire in its halls eventually being killed by security officers. This event follows another two days before in the town of Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Quebec in which two soldiers were rammed by a car driven by 24-year-old Quebecker Martin Couture-Rouleau. One soldier was killed and the other injured. In that incident it is alleged that Couture-Rouleau waited outside of a military office and then ran down the two soldiers. Courture-Rouleau then fled by car and was chased by police and was eventually shot and killed.

Canadians abhor the use of force to settle conflicts whether internally or externally. These shocking events bring in stark relief the necessity to establish ways and means to prevent terrorism as a means to sort out differences. A problem which immediately presents itself for Canadians is that such acts of terror at home are used to justify acts of state terrorism abroad, instead of trying to establish a consensus about how the problem of terrorism poses itself and the types of measures that will address it.

This was the case following the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon in the United States on September 11, 2001. Immediately the U.S. and then NATO launched a war of aggression on Afghanistan, in which Canada participated and which continues today as Afghans resist the intervention of foreign powers. In 2003 the U.S. then launched a war of aggression against Iraq on the bogus pretext that Iraq posed a threat to international peace and security. That war continues today in a new form. Both wars continue to cause immeasurable death and destruction in those countries. This includes the most depraved and barbaric acts of occupying U.S. forces in both countries including mutilations of the murdered, mass killings, torture, kidnapping and many more unspeakable crimes today ascribed to what is called the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Canadians are faced with the fact that the events in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu and Ottawa take place in the context of Canada joining a new war of aggression against the people of Iraq and Syria in the name of fighting ISIS, itself the spawn of forces put into motion by the U.S. and others in Syria and elsewhere to achieve the aim of regime change in that country. The government has attempted to justify its actions citing the



barbaric actions of that group, very similar to those committed by U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, and elsewhere in the 20th century such as in Korea and Vietnam and many other countries.

High ranking ministers in the Harper government have already claimed that the killings in Canada are acts of terror. Meanwhile, the government calls acts of terror against the government or armed forces of other nations such as Syria, Libya and Palestine acts of freedom fighters or even "self-defense." Will it now invoke these latest killings to try and justify a war that does not have any legitimacy in the eyes of the people? Will it now use the killings to push further measures which give the state more arbitrary powers to detain and criminalize Canadians? These measures

lack legitimate criteria based on a definition of what constitutes terrorism so that government and security agencies can be held to account for how these powers are wielded. They cannot be for purposes of criminalizing those who oppose the government or resist aggression on the basis that such views are considered "radical." To criminalize the peoples right to conscience in the name of high ideals is itself an extremist measure, which will further use violence to sort out differences amongst the people. All indications are that this is what the government is planning.

Even before these events took place, Public Safety Minister Steven Blaney announced that new anti-terrorist legislation would be brought forward by the government that would allow CSIS to obtain more information from Canada's allies on Canadians who join what are called "terror groups" abroad and that would "enhance intelligence-gathering by providing anonymity in court for CSIS informants."

Without a definition of terrorism that is based on upholding the rights of all, at home and abroad, such measures will merely give the state more arbitrary powers to terrorize the population. It will not resolve any problems nor prevent terrorism in all its forms because it only aims at what the Harper government decides is terrorism, rather than what the society has decided constitutes terrorism through democratic mechanisms which give rise to the public opinion required to create a stable situation.

Canadians must be firm in opposing all attempts to use these events to bring into being a new campaign of state terror at home or abroad. They must speak out and take measures to empower themselves so that they can lead the establishment of a government that upholds international law and the security of all peoples as the condition for the security of Canadians.