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Publication of the U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization

February 5, 2016

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STATE TAKEOVER NO SOLUTION

Salute People of Flint Fighting for Their Right to Safe Water

The people of Flint, Michigan have been fighting since April of 2014 for their right to safe drinking water. They have organized to expose refusal by government to deal with the problem, including

themselves testing the water and working with scientists to confirm lead levels are so high the water is hazardous waste. After months of concerted effort, including getting

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Salute People of Flint : 1-10

TEACHERS AND STUDENTS MOBILIZING

Equal Right to Education for All! Full Funding Now

Teachers, students, staff and parents are mobilizing in many cities, including Chicago, Detroit and Buffalo, demanding the *Equal Right to Education for All!* Detroit and Buffalo are contending

with state takeovers of their public schools, and Chicago is threatened with the same. The state takeovers, which have also occurred in cities like Memphis, New Orleans,

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Equal Right to Education for All : 11-19

HAITIAN ELECTIONS POSTPONED INDEFINITELY

Defend Haitian Resistance to Foreign Interference — U.S. Get Out of Haiti!

On January 22, two days before the Haitian presidential runoff election and third-round elections for a number of seats in the Senate and Chamber of Deputies were

scheduled to take place, the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) called off the elections indefinitely. "January 24 is no longer opportune for having

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OUR SECURITY LIES IN OUR FIGHT FOR THE RIGHTS OF ALL

February edition of ***Voice of Revolution***

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I • Salute People of Flint

scientists and doctors to confirm their concerns, while government ignored them, the state and federal government have been forced to admit they created a disaster. More than 10,000 children are thought to have permanent brain damage as a result of this crime.

Even now, it is mainly the people that are taking action. For example more than 300 plumbers poured into Flint the end of January, to install much needed water filters for free. According to residents, not all the faucets in Flint can fit a filter, which each resident needs to get rid of lead in their drinking water. Some of the

faucets are older and oddly shaped, making the installation of a filter nearly impossible. Local plumbers with United Association Local 370 in Flint have been going door-to-door making sure that faucets are filter ready. They got a big boost from the hundreds of union volunteers. In one day alone, plumbers replaced faucets and filters in 800 homes.

Flint, like Detroit and Benton Harbor, are cities taken over by the state, using an emergency manager. Indeed, Darnell Earley, the manager for Flint while the water was being poisoned with lead, then became the emergency manager for Detroit public schools. The emergency manager has broad powers to dictate budget, services, wages, hiring and firing, and more. And in every instance, as is also the case with state takeovers of schools in



other states, the public good has no place and private interests alone are served.

It is not an accident, when there is no public governance and no public space to confront elected government, that such government-made disasters take place. Had the people of Flint been in a position to decide, there would be no disaster — as people as a collective would put their interests first, not those of the monopolies. This is evident from the persistent fight waged to secure safe water, from the plumbers who volunteered, from the many around the country who have organized to

send bottled water to Flint to assist residents there.

State takeovers, whether of cities or public schools are not solutions to any of the social problems people face, whether it is the right to safe water, quality education, jobs, an end to poverty, and so forth. The solution lies not in appointed managers with great powers who are not accountable to the people. It does not lie with concentrating power in the executive, whether governors, or commissioners, or the president. The solution lies in extending democracy by empowering the people themselves to govern and decide. The people of Flint have shown through their actions that they can do a far better job of defending rights, as have teachers in Chicago, Detroit and Buffalo. So let all organize for political empowerment of the people!

Flint's Government-Made Crime of Lead-filled Water

The entire city of Flint, with more than 100,000 residents and people who commute to work in the city, have been contending with high levels of lead and other pollutants in their water since April, 2014. Flint is controlled by an emergency manager, appointed by the Governor, with complete control over budget, services and governance as a whole. It is the financial manager, Darnell Earley, appointed in October of 2013, who dictated the change in water supply, from treated water from Detroit, to use of the Flint river. The river was known to be highly polluted and had not been used as a source of drinking water since the 1960's. But it was cheaper. The financial manager, representing private interests with no concern for the public good, imposed the change.

Costs for water in Flint are among the highest in the country. For almost two years now, as parents put it, "We are paying to poison are kids."

The city and state knew there was a problem early on, but did nothing about it for the people. When General Motors, however, complained about the water within months of the change, because it rusted machines, it was switched back to treated water from Detroit. The people of Flint however, up until December of 2015,

continued to be told to use the water, that it was safe. This despite numerous complaints from residents immediately after the switch and continuing, as well as evidence from scientists and doctors about high lead levels.

Flint residents and worried parents who complained that the water was making them and their children ill were ignored. Experts at Virginia Tech university, called in by local activists, issued a report about high lead levels in the river water, while a pediatrician at Flint's Hurley Medical Center hospital, Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, discovered elevated levels of lead in blood tests carried out on local children. They too were ignored and dismissed.

High lead levels are particularly dangerous to young children, whose fast-developing brains are prone to permanent damage that often does not show up until years later, in the form of learning disabilities, mental disorders and behavioral problems.

"We are dealing with an invisible killer. Parents are expecting that within five years there will be signs of attention deficit disorder in children who have been affected and later there could be problems with mental disorders. People here are very upset and angry," Flint-based attorney Tracelle Young said. Health effects in

adults could include a higher risk of cancer. “I think the governor needs to either resign or be investigated for a crime. We want to see people in criminal court, not just civil court for this. It’s a travesty,” she said.

Julie Hurwitz, another lawyer working on the class-action lawsuit brought by residents, said that city and state authorities had repeatedly scoffed at concerns raised by many people. “We are living in a time when truth is crazier than fiction. The almighty dollar was put over the safety and well-being of the people of Flint, especially working-class and low-income residents who were less able to go out and buy their own water in order not to be poisoned,” Hurwitz said.

The lawsuit, filed in U.S. district court in Detroit on November 13, 2015, claims 14 officials, including Governor Snyder and former Flint mayor Dayne Walling are responsible for replacing water in Flint with a supply that was “dangerous, unsafe and inadequately treated . . . in conduct that was so egregious and so outrageous it shocks the conscience.” Lead levels in Flint water have reached 13,200 parts per billion in some homes. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations require federal action at levels above 15 parts per billion. At 5,000 ppb, water is considered hazardous waste. The Centers for Disease Control considers that no level of lead is safe.

The Flint Water Advisory Task Force, which investigated the situation and released a preliminary report in December 2015, found that the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) “throughout 2015, as the public raised concerns and as independent studies and testing were conducted and brought to the attention of MDEQ, the agency’s response was often one of aggressive dismissal, belittlement, and attempts to discredit these efforts and the individuals involved. We find both the tone and substance of many MDEQ public statements to be completely unacceptable.”

Flint Water Crisis: Michigan Officials Ignored Warnings About Toxicity

Oliver Milman and Ryan Felton, The Guardian, February 3, 2016

The Environmental Protection Agency warned of an unfolding toxic water crisis in Flint but was “met with resistance” by Michigan authorities, a fiery congressional hearing into the city’s public health disaster has heard. Expert advice was dismissed, prompting Michigan’s government to issue an apology to the people of Flint at the hearing for sidelining people who raised concerns over dangerous levels of lead in the city’s water.

Congress was also told that flawed water testing practices, now eliminated in Flint, are happening unchecked across the US, risking a much wider public health crisis in other cities.

A picture emerged at the hearing of failure, delay and resistance as state officials ignored scientists and kept the public in the dark about health risks. One senior official admitted there were still no guarantees that water was safe to drink, conceding: “We all let the people of Flint down.”

Joel Beauvais, acting deputy assistant administrator of the EPA’s office of water, said the regulator was aware of elevated lead levels in Flint’s water in spring 2015, with these problems outlined further

The task force’s findings, coupled with the long resistance by residents, prompted the resignation of the MDEQ’s director, Dan Wyant, who, like Flint’s emergency manager at the time, was appointed to the position by the Governor.

People Organize to Defend Their Interests

It was mostly the parents in Flint that organized to expose the high lead levels and demand action by government officials. Parents contacted researchers in Virginia, who assisted them in getting water samples from their home faucets. The average amount of lead in one family’s water was more than 2,400 parts per billion (ppb), substantially higher than levels deemed safe by the EPA. The highest test came back at 13,200 ppb.

People in Flint formed a group called Water You Fighting For? Together with scientists from Virginia Tech they organized to secure 270 test kits from households from across the city. The scientists applauded the effort, saying work by residents to ensure homes were tested — something not done by government officials — was “truly heroic.” The Governor and Emergency Manager disputed the findings, leaving conditions to worsen further with more children and families impacted.

It is also not an accident that such a crime took place in Flint, a city that is majority African American and where more than 40 percent of the population is impoverished. While the government claimed environmental racism was not involved. People of Flint fell otherwise, especially given the disproportionate number of African American children. It is also the case that nationwide, African Americans are disproportionately impacted by toxic dumps and lead poisoning, such as in New Jersey and New York.

Refusal by government to provide safe water is a crime to be punished and the persistent effort of the people of Flint to defend their right to safe water is to be recognized and applauded.

in a June 2015 memo.

Beauvais told the congressional committee that what happened in Flint was “avoidable and should never have happened” after the city switched from Detroit’s treated water to untreated water from the Flint River in April 2014. Flint was under direct emergency management by Michigan at the time. [The emergency manager, Darnell Early, appointed by the Governor, replaced publicly elected governance and had complete control of all governance in Flint, including budget and providing social services. He is the same emergency manager for the Detroit public schools, which are in horrendous and unsafe conditions, where debt payments to the banks now equal that of payments for salaries and wages to teachers and staff. — VOR Ed. Note]

“The Michigan department of environmental quality (MDEQ) incorrectly advised the city of Flint that corrosion control treatment was not necessary, resulting in leaching of lead into the city’s drinking water,” he said. “EPA regional staff urged MDEQ to address the lack of corrosion control, but was met with resistance. The

SAFE WATER IS A RIGHT

delays in implementing the actions needed to treat the drinking water and in informing the public of ongoing health risks raise very serious concerns.”

Keith Creagh, director of the MDEQ, told the hearing that he was apologetic to the people of Flint and admitted: “We still cannot guarantee that the water is safe to drink.

“When government finally responded to the public outcry, thanks to the relentless efforts of independent scientists whose warnings turned out to be correct – our tone was combative and dismissive,” said Creagh, who was appointed in January. “None of the levels of government communicated effectively with the public.”

Creagh said that while Michigan’s implementation of federal lead and copper regulations “was ineffective in protecting public health”, he also blamed the EPA for a lack in urgency in addressing the problem by not forwarding the June memo until November.

“Legitimate concerns raised by EPA’s own expert staff were not elevated or provided to either the city or the state for review and action until after the state’s response was well under way,” he said.

“We all share responsibility in the Flint water crisis. We all let the citizens of Flint down.”

Congressmen and women across the party divide on the oversight committee attacked the “outrageous failure at every level” that caused elevated lead levels in Flint’s drinking water. The crisis was ignored or sidelined for over a year until a state of emergency was declared in December.

Lead is a known neurotoxin that can cause hair loss, vomiting and developmental problems [including serious brain damage] when ingested. The American Academy of Pediatrics wrote to the hearing to state that thousands of children aged under six in Flint have been exposed to lead poisoning and will need ongoing help with health and behavioral issues.

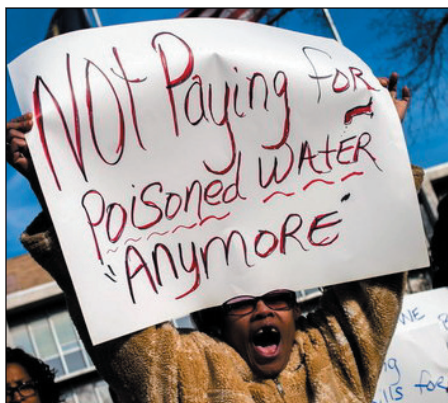
Marc Edwards, a Virginia Tech academic who led independent sampling of Flint’s water to uncover the crisis, said the failure to act on previous lead poisoning incidents, such as in Washington DC in 2004, shows an ongoing “callous disregard” for public health.

“Agencies that are paid to protect us from lead in water can get away with anything,” he told the hearing. “It’s part 1984 and part Enemy of the People. I’m begging you, please: fix the EPA lead and copper rule, and fix the EPA.

“The only thing I can conclude is that the EPA doesn’t care about children drinking water with lead in it. You’d have to ask them why they don’t do the job they are paid to do. Had it not been for people completely outside the system, children in Flint would still be drinking that water today. That is a fact.”

Edwards and Leanne Walters, a Flint resident whose household had an extremely high reading for lead in its water, said that the EPA has allowed “loopholes” in the testing of water to persist across the US despite previous warnings.

These include, as the Guardian has revealed, the “pre-flushing” of faucets the night before a water test to influence the amount of lead in a sample, a failure to test high-risk homes, and instruc-



tions to pour water slowly into a testing bottle, thereby not dislodging lead into the sample.

“The EPA has cast a blind eye on these municipalities,” Edwards said. “In Durham, North Carolina, in 2008, children were poisoned because the water was tested after the aerator was removed from faucets. The EPA wrote a memo to ban this protocol but they know water utilities still use that protocol. It’s extremely frustrating.”

Walters added: “I’m outraged EPA still allows this dishonesty with testing to

continue.”

Beauvais said the issue was a “concern” and something that the EPA was starting to look at nationally.

Jason Chaffetz, the Republican representative who is chairing the hearing, said the committee will look to question other figures, including Michigan governor Rick Snyder and Darnell Earley, who was the emergency manager of Flint at the time. Earley was meant to appear at the hearing but didn’t. Chaffetz said he has issued a subpoena for Earley to attend and that US marshals will “hunt him down” and bring him before the committee.

“This is the United States of America, this isn’t a third world country, this isn’t meant to happen here,” Chaffetz said. “I can’t comprehend what the families are going through. This is a failing at every level. The public has a right to be outraged and it must be fixed.”

The EPA has been working directly in Flint since an emergency order was signed in January. The FBI is also investigating the issue. Michigan declared its own state of emergency on 5 January, which has prompted the handing out of 234,000 cases of bottled water and 100,000 water filters to Flint residents.

Over 100 residents from Detroit and Flint, spread out across four buses, traveled to Washington for the hearing on Wednesday.

As the hearing was underway, a group of 30 to 40 Flint residents marched down Independence Avenue, chanting “Flint lives matter” and “arrest Governor Snyder.”

Inside the building, a line snaked out of the hearing room, which was crowded to capacity. Two other overflow rooms were filled out with lively groups of observers. At one point, when Virginia congressman and committee member Gerry Connolly told the room “I do want to get the governor at this table”, an approving overflow room broke out in applause. Flint resident Tammy Loren said the congressional hearings should “put an end to this.”

“Everybody needs to be held accountable from the top to the lowest,” Loren said. She found out two weeks ago that her four sons – ages 14, 12, 11, and 10 – had elevated lead levels in their blood. “My 12-year-old has what looks like chicken pox all over his body that he’s had for over a year now and through all kinds of treatments, nothing works.” Her family kept using their household water, she said, placing trust in the government’s word. “Everybody kept saying the water was safe,” Loren said. “All you had to do was boil it. So we didn’t know, we didn’t know the truth until everything came out.”

The Science Behind the Flint Water Crisis: Corrosion of Pipes, Erosion of Trust

Terese Olson, Associate Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering, University of Michigan, January 28, 2016

Flint's recent water crisis is a stinging reminder that the infrastructure we often take for granted has many vulnerabilities. The crisis also underscores the complexity of providing communities with safe, high-quality potable water.

Water utilities interested in using a new river water source, as the city of Flint was in 2014, would normally hire engineering firms to conduct detailed studies of the raw water quality and pilot studies to evaluate various water treatment process options before choosing a treatment approach.

As a researcher on water disinfection and professor of civil and environmental engineering, I know that a planning period of at least two to three years to get to a ribbon-cutting for such a facility is normal. The design of these systems is iterative by its nature and requires input from multiple stakeholders at various points in the design process.

Fateful mistakes in Flint

Water quality issues in Flint began with the decision of city officials in 2014 to switch from buying treated drinking water from Detroit to treating Flint River water themselves using a city-owned treatment facility.

The switch was considered a temporary money saving "fix" to provide the city with drinking water until they were able to join a new regional system, the Karegnondi Water Authority. A 10-month, \$171,000 engineering effort was undertaken to equip the Flint plant to treat Flint River water before it was put into service.

Sources of drinking water supply, in general, include groundwater and surface waters, such as lakes and rivers. Among those water sources, rivers present the greatest treatment challenge.

Relative to groundwater, surface waters tend to contain more particles, microorganisms, organic matter, taste- and odor-causing compounds, and many types of trace contaminants. On average, surface water also tends to be more corrosive than groundwater.

Beyond the challenges of designing a treatment approach tailored to the source water, water quality engineers must consider myriad engineering, regulatory and financial constraints during design.

In recent years, the cost of chemicals used to treat water has increased at rates well above inflation. Based on a 2009 report



published by the Water Research Foundation, the average price of phosphoric acid, a chemical that can inhibit corrosion, increased by 233 percent in 2008 alone. These anti-corrosion chemicals are used to prevent lead and other metals in the pipes from leaching into the water. At the time Flint decided to treat its own water, chemical costs were still increasing.

Many utilities treating surface water are under pressure to look for less costly approaches to perform chemical treatment. Yet particle removal, a critical step used to treat surface waters like the Flint River, is a chemical-intensive operation.

Iron and aluminum salts are typically coagulants added to water supplies to help aggregate particles so they can be effectively removed through settling. There are many types of iron and aluminum coagulants, and they have different degrees of effectiveness depending upon the quality of water being treated.

Coagulant choice is an important design decision; therefore the choice of

coagulant should not be based only on cost. For example, each coagulant has to be optimized to enhance removal of natural organic matter in the source water. If too little organic matter is removed, it will react with chlorine disinfectants in the water to form hazardous by-products.

A switch from sulfate-based to chloride-based aluminum or iron coagulant salts also alters the chloride-to-sulfate ratio in water. It was this ratio that Dr. Marc Edwards, a faculty member at Virginia Tech, linked in 2010 to higher lead concentrations in vulnerable distribution systems with pipes made from lead. The Flint treatment plant relied on iron chloride coagulants, which may have contributed to the corrosivity of the water.

Science of corrosion

Because of Flint's method of treating Flint River water, it experienced problems with elevated trihalomethanes, a regulated class of disinfection by-products that are known carcinogens. A domino series of causes and effects were responsible for this problem.

The Flint River is naturally high in corrosive chloride. Therefore, iron pipes in the water distribution system began corroding immediately after the initial switch from Detroit water. The iron that was released from the corroding pipes reacted with residual chlorine that is added to kill microorganisms, making it unavail-

able to function as a disinfectant.

Because chlorine, which reacted with the iron pipes, could not act as a disinfectant, bacteria levels spiked. When coliform bacteria were detected in distribution system water samples, water utility managers were obliged by law to increase the levels of chlorine. The higher levels of chlorine, while reducing coliform counts, led to the formation of more trihalomethanes.

Providing adequate disinfection while minimizing disinfection by-products is a challenge faced by most utilities even under the best of circumstances. The problems became intractable in Flint due to the excessive corrosion of the pipes that deliver water to people's homes.

The science of pipe corrosion in drinking water systems is complex and not completely understood. Corrosion control occurs when naturally forming minerals deposit on pipe walls, thereby protecting the iron pipe surfaces from exposure to oxidants in the water. Changes in water quality sometimes dissolve these mineral coatings, exposing the pipe to corrosion.

In iron pipe systems, the released iron corrosion particles are visible, causing colored and turbid water. In older distribution systems, where lead service lines are often still in place, corrosion then releases lead and copper. Corrosion rates can be affected by many factors that are not well understood, including the presence of bacteria that colonize the pipe wall, as well as pipe age and water flow rates.

Because of the uncertainties around leaching, the majority of utilities treating surface water add phosphate corrosion inhibitors to control corrosion. They devise doses based on the water industry's experience, rather than on rigorous scientific calculations.

False economies

Empirical tests known as "loop tests" are commonly used to

assess the effectiveness of corrosion control strategies applied to a given water distribution system. There is no record that such tests were performed in Flint.

A critical cost-saving decision made by Flint not to use corrosion inhibitors, especially when water previously supplied by Detroit did contain them, should have raised concerns. Evidence to demonstrate that inhibitors were unnecessary was a minimum common-sense requirement.

Ignorance among utility personnel and water quality engineers of the importance of corrosion control management and its subtle linkage to decisions made elsewhere in the treatment plant unfortunately also played a role...

In many water treatment textbooks, the topic of pipeline corrosion is covered as an afterthought. Flint's experience should serve as a siren call to the profession of water quality engineers to remedy this oversight.

By not adding a corrosion inhibitor, Flint was going to save about \$140 per day. But the inestimable costs of the errors made in Flint will reverberate through the community for a long time and their magnitude will dwarf the original planned savings.

Replacement of Flint's lead service lines, which is the only permanent solution to address its lead vulnerability, is estimated to cost up to \$1.5 billion, according to Flint's mayor, Karen Weaver.

Investment of funds in infrastructure that might have made a large dent toward solving the problem permanently must now focus on monitoring, alternative water sources, point-of-use treatment filters, health costs and restoring the badly eroded trust of the community.

Given the complexities and uncertainties in producing safe potable drink, a nonnegotiable respect for the necessary planning and testing steps of any new system is paramount to prevent such incidents as we have seen in Flint. A lack of due diligence in planning will always cost more in the end.

Eleven N.J. Cities Have More Lead-Affected Kids than Flint, Michigan

NJ.com, February 3, 2016

Eleven cities in New Jersey, and two counties, have a higher proportion of young children with dangerous lead levels than Flint, Michigan, does, according to New Jersey and Michigan statistics cited by a community advocacy group.

With the eyes of the nation focused on the brain damage and other problems associated with lead-contaminated water in Flint, several community advocacy organizations in New Jersey banded together this week to draw attention to New Jersey's lead problem, asking for a renewed focus on solving it.

In New Jersey, children 6 years of age and younger have continued to ingest lead from paint in windows, doors and other woodwork found in older homes, particularly in older, poorer cities, said Elyse Pivnick, director of environmental health for Isles, Inc., a community development organization based in Trenton.

"In light of the Flint debacle, we wanted people to understand that water is not the only thing that's poisoning children," she said. "Most people think the lead problem was solved when we took lead out of gasoline and new homes in the 1970s, but that's not true."

The communities with the high lead levels include Irvington, East Orange, Trenton, Newark, Paterson, Plainfield, Jersey City, Elizabeth, Atlantic City, New Brunswick and Passaic, along with Salem and Cumberland counties. "You can breathe it in from dust and you can swallow it," Pivnick said.

Christie Vetoes \$10M Fund to Remove Lead Paint

New Jersey Department of Health statistics from 2014, the last year for which data is available, show that those 11 cities and two counties had a higher percentage of children with elevated

lead levels than Flint did in 2015, as shown by Michigan state statistics.

Also, Pivnick pointed out, in 2015, there were more than 3,000 new cases of children under the age of 6 in New Jersey with elevated levels of lead in their blood. Overall, advocates said, about 225,000 young children in the state have been afflicted by lead since 2000.

At a Trenton press conference on Monday, Isles Inc. and several other community action groups called on Gov. Chris Christie to restore \$10 million in funding for the Lead Hazard Control Assistance Fund in the next state budget.

That money had been earmarked for the removal of lead from older homes, and also financed home inspections, emergency relocations for affected families and efforts to educate the public.

Just two weeks ago, Christie pocket-vetoed a \$10 million bill that set aside money for the lead control assistance fund. This was the third consecutive two-year legislative session in which the bill failed to be signed into law.

The \$10 million is money accrued based on a fee on paint

sales, but governors have diverted the funds' revenue to support the state budget since the fund was established in 2004, according to the bill's supporters.

In addition to more state funding, Pivnick and the other advocates called for more involvement by local communities and leaders in focusing on the lead problem, including enforcing housing codes more diligently and expanding inspections to rental units with fewer than three bedrooms.

Lead poisoning leads to brain damage and the associated memory loss and related learning disabilities, and it "robs children of their potential," Pivnick said.

With the problem even more widespread in New Jersey than it is in Flint, Pivnick said, "We should have the same protocols in place that Flint does. Why aren't the same alarms going off here?"

Other groups joining the campaign included the Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey; New Jersey Citizen Action and the Anti-Poverty Network of New Jersey. [...]

Contaminated Water Requires a National Public Health Mobilization

Margaret Flowers and Jill Stein, February 5, 2016

It is hard to miss the water contamination that residents in Flint, Michigan, are experiencing. Television footage shows family members holding bottles of yellow, orange or brown water. They could see and taste the change in their water quality shortly after Gov. Rick Snyder ordered the switch to supply water from the polluted Flint River, rather than Lake Huron, without adding anti-corrosives to prevent leaching from lead pipes in early 2014. Thanks to a few dedicated researchers from Virginia Tech, the elevated lead in Flint's water has been exposed.

Since national attention has turned to Flint, information from other cities is coming to light showing similar problems. Sebring, Ohio, is one city where residents have been warned not to drink the water because of elevated lead levels. And it was recently revealed that there are high levels of lead in water in Jackson, Mississippi, even though the results of the tests were available six months ago.

Water should be tested for radioactivity, as well as for heavy metals such as lead.

In Flint, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) did not inform the public about the high lead levels in the water when they learned about it, even though the state provided bottled water to public employees. The governor also reconnected General Motors to Lake Huron when they complained, just a few months after the transition in early 2014. The state knew, but continued to allow toxic water — which qualified as "hazardous waste" by EPA standards—for Flint residents without telling them.

Not talked about, perhaps because it is harder to see, is a national water contamination crisis that has been going on for

decades. It is invisible and tasteless and the mainstream media won't cover it. This contamination is caused by the United States' secret Fukushima, radioactive and other heavy metals leaking from the more than 15,000 abandoned uranium mines, as well as other sources related to energy extraction throughout the United States.

We need a national public health mobilization to assess all drinking water sources in a transparent way and a plan to protect the health of residents and the future of our water supply. Water should be tested for radioactivity, as well as for heavy metals such as lead. In addition, the toxic byproducts of our dirty energy system are another of many compelling reasons why we need to transition rapidly to a cleaner, sustainable green energy economy.

The Biggest Nuclear Accident You Have Never Heard About

Most people in the United States know about the accident at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant in March 1979. Although the official reports stated that an "insignificant" amount of radiation was released (this understatement has since been refuted), it is called "America's worst nuclear accident." Very few people know about the actual worst nuclear accident in the United States, which happened three months later in Church Rock, New Mexico. Perhaps this is because it mostly impacted people of the Navajo (Diné) Nation.

On July 16, 1979, the wall of a tailings pond for a uranium mill broke open and released 93 million gallons of radioactive

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waste into the Arroyo Pipeline, a tributary to the Puerco River. The waste traveled 80 miles down the Puerco River into Arizona. Not only is it amazing that this spill was not reported in the media, but it is also remarkable that the governor of New Mexico refused to issue a state of emergency. It took days for people who live along the Puerco River to be told about the accident, and though they were warned not to use the water for themselves or their livestock, they were not given access to sufficient clean water.

To this day, people who live downstream from the mill drink water that is polluted by uranium and other radioactive and heavy metals. Tommy Rock, co-founder of Diné No Nukes and a doctoral student at Northern Arizona University, has been testing the water that people around Church Rock, New Mexico, drink. He is finding high levels of uranium in some of the wells - even wells that are regulated and supposed to be tested routinely.

One of the wells that showed levels of uranium at twice the maximum limit serves the Sanders Unified School District in northern Arizona, which has a thousand students. The community did not know about the high uranium content until Rock informed them.

“State and federal regulators knew about the contamination for years, and our community is concerned about the long-term chronic exposure to uranium because we have been consuming this contaminated water without being notified,” said Sanders resident Tonya Baloo, a member of the Diné people. Now Rock is working with the Sanders community to find clean water.

Solution to water contamination crisis requires an urgent public health response

There are roughly 1,000 abandoned uranium mines in and around the Navajo Nation, and very few of them have been cleaned up. None of them have been taken care of adequately. Klee Benally, who lives in Arizona and coordinates the Clean Up The Mines! campaign, calls it “toxic landscaping.” Benally adds that the Gold King Mine spill, which polluted the 215-mile segment of the San Juan River that flows through the Navajo Nation last August, further compels the urgent need to clean up abandoned mines before they destroy more rivers with toxic waste.

Uranium is the radioactive metal that is used to power nuclear plants and to make nuclear weapons. When it is mined, 85 percent of the radioactivity is left behind in the waste rock. That waste and exposed ore continue to emit radiation for hundreds of thousands of years. As the uranium breaks down to become lead in its final form, it also releases radon gas, which causes lung cancer. Exposure to uranium and other radioactive metals by drinking contaminated water, breathing contaminated dust or eating food produced in contaminated areas causes cancer, birth defects, kidney disease and autoimmune diseases. Children



and the elderly are most affected. These mines are located in the breadbasket of the United States, which provides food to the country and many parts of the world.

When the Clean Up The Mines! campaign was launched nearly two years ago, we toured abandoned uranium mines in South Dakota with Klee Benally and Charmaine White Face of Defenders of the Black Hills. Many of the abandoned mines are open pits. One that we visited was very close to an elementary school in Ludlow, South Dakota. We measured high levels of radiation — over 150 counts per minute in the playground area.

White Face has been working for years to raise awareness of the radioactive contamination in the Great Sioux Nation, which includes North and South Dakota, Wyoming, Montana and parts of Nebraska. She has asked for studies by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, but has been denied because she was told there are not enough people in the area. However, she is certain that people are being impacted. Communities close to the mines suffer high cancer and miscarriage rates.

Like Tommy Rock, White Face has also been testing drinking water and is finding high levels of uranium as well as thorium, a radioactive metal not regulated by the EPA. The composition of the uranium shows that it is coming from the abandoned mines rather than being naturally occurring. Despite the contamination, communities continue to drink the water because they have no choice. This has been going on for decades.

Recently, White Face, Rock and Benally traveled to Washington, DC, with other Indigenous people from the Southwest and Northern Great Plains to sound the alarm about radioactive pollution. They call themselves the “miner’s canary” because they are trying to alert the public about the impacts of this national problem. In addition to the 15,000 abandoned uranium mines, there are other sources of radioactive pollution that are not being monitored.

The largest coal mine in the United States, the Black Thunder Mine in Wyoming, provides 40 percent of the nation’s coal. Its uranium-laced coal is shipped both to the East and the West, where it is burned in power plants and turned into radioactive

coal ash. Fracking is another concern, because the wastewater from fracking wells in the Bakken oil and other shales bring radioactive metals up from deep underground. This wastewater is held in open ponds, is sometimes discharged into waterways and is sprayed on roads during ice and snowstorms.

A National Problem That Needs a National Solution

The solution to the water contamination crisis requires an urgent public health response. Water must be tested regularly for contaminants, including radioactivity; the public must be notified immediately when there are concerns; and clean drinking water must be provided when public water is not potable, no matter the size of the affected population. Sources of contamination must be cleaned up.

This may sound like a lot to require, but consider the flip side. Governor Snyder in Michigan changed the water source for Flint in order to save money. However, the result of that decision will be much more expensive than doing the right thing from the start. The state has already authorized \$28 million to address the problem. Flint's mayor says it will cost up to \$1.5 billion to replace the city's aging pipes. Expensive medical care will be required for the 6,000 to 12,000 children who have been exposed to lead poisoning. Altogether, it is estimated that this crisis will cost \$10 billion.

As physicians, we are concerned about the future of our water supply.

One of the problems exposed by the Flint water crisis is the inadequacy of water testing and notification systems. Some municipalities meet their clean water requirements by conducting tests that violate EPA guidelines. They only test areas that are known to be clean or flush out the pipes prior to testing. According to the *Guardian*, "A report published [in 2015], commissioned by the American Water Works Association, found that if the water was tested directly from lead pipes, up to 96 million Americans could be found to be drinking water with unsafe levels of lead."

Another problem is that utilities conduct their own testing without adequate oversight by local EPA regulators. It is a scenario that is seen all too often in the United States: close relationships between regulators and the entities they are supposed to regulate that lead to lax oversight.

An EPA task force issued recommendations in 2015 on lead and copper monitoring in water. Those recommendations have not yet been adopted. That needs to be expedited. And there needs to be a task force that will test water for radioactivity and issue rules to protect the public from radioactive pollution in water.

Tommy Rock reports that the standard for radioactive pollution in water is higher than what was originally recommended because utilities did not want to have more stringent requirements, and they



are pushing to raise the maximum allowable levels for radioactive pollutants to be higher. This must be prevented. As Physicians for Social Responsibility reports, "There is no safe level of radionuclide exposure, whether from food, water or other sources. Period."

Steps must also be taken to stop the leaking of uranium and other radioactive metals into water, and that means cleaning up the thousands of abandoned uranium mines. Legislation is being drafted that would require a single high standard of clean up for the mines. You can learn more about that bill and how to support it at CleanUpTheMines.org.

Access to Water Is a Public Good

Clean water is a necessity. People cannot survive without access to water. There are many threats to our water system beyond contamination, such as the climate crisis, overuse and privatization. Water is quickly becoming our most precious resource, one that needs to be managed in a holistic way so that there is enough water to meet everyone's basic needs.

As physicians, we are concerned about the future of our water supply. The Flint water crisis should provoke a public debate at the national level about the best ways to protect clean water, including what type of water infrastructure is required and how water is owned and managed.

With the reality of the climate crisis upon us, corporations view water as a commodity that will increase in value. In 2013, almost 70 percent of water systems in the United States were privately owned. A report by Food & Water Watch shows that private water companies charge higher prices and cut corners, such as using poor construction materials and not hiring sufficient staff. Privatization of water must be prevented and reversed because corporations do not treat water as a public good, but as a profit center for their investors.

The invisible crisis of radioactive metals in our water raises the question of the impacts of fossil fuel and nuclear energy extraction on our water quality and availability. The extractive energy industry is one that consumes tremendous amounts of water and pollutes it with chemicals and radioactive metals. This means that protecting our fragile water future also means transitioning rapidly to a clean and green carbon-free and nuclear-free energy economy.

We need a national plan to manage this precious necessity, clean water. That includes an integrated approach to preserve and protect clean water in a way that involves coordinated but decentralized decision-making, transparency and participation by local communities...We can no longer take clean water for granted. These crises are a wake-up call to create a 21st century water policy that treats water as a public good, not a commodity for corporate profit.

I • Equal Right to Education

Newark, Philadelphia and Youngstown, target mainly African American and Latino cities. They have increased segregation and inequality, while claiming to do the opposite. They have also meant major cuts to funding, increases in class sizes and other attacks on the rights of teachers.

Conditions in Chicago are such that teachers are preparing for a possible strike in May, while already demonstrating to demand full funding. Hundreds of millions have been handed over to the banks, while major cuts to education funding are imposed. Similarly in Detroit, debt financing has grown so much it is now about one third of the city budget. At the same time, buildings are rat-infested, have dangerous black mold, falling and leaking ceilings, classes of 35-45 students, 170 vacant teaching positions, and more. In Buffalo almost half the district has been taken over by the state, with a local receiver not accountable to the public and preparing to involuntarily transfer teachers anytime and dictate other changes as he decides. Everywhere, teachers and students are rejecting these attacks and defending rights.

All the cities involved have large minority student populations

and large numbers of impoverished students. They are being hardest hit by these racist state takeovers and funding cuts. There is no evidence and no studies that show state takeovers solve any problem. There is considerable evidence that they make conditions worse, with Detroit an obvious example. The state imposed an emergency manager on the city, which was managed into bankruptcy and the crime of shutting off water to residents. A manager was also imposed on the schools, which are also now about to go bankrupt, so as not to pay pensions and healthcare, while guaranteeing debt payments to the banks.

The equal right to education for all is a necessity for a modern society and for contributing to overcoming inequality. Ensuring that education is for arming the next generation to change the world and move society forward is also necessary for overcoming racism and inequality. It is only teachers, parents, staff and students together who can raise the quality of education and together defend the equal right to education for all. It is they who must be the decision makers, not individuals appointed by state executives.

CHICAGO TEACHERS ORGANIZING

Thousands March to Defend Teachers and Public Education

Chicago Teachers Union, February 5, 2016

More than 3,000 Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) rank-and-file members, parents, students, public education supporters, union allies and community organizations representing all backgrounds braved freezing winter temperatures last night in marching throughout the Loop in support of the Union's efforts to secure a fair contract



from the city and schools Chicago's students deserve. In an act of civil disobedience, 16 CTU members staged a sit-in at the Bank of America (BOA) branch at 135 S. LaSalle, and were subsequently arrested and detained by Chicago police.

The arrestees demanded that Chicago BOA President Paul Lambert begin negotiations with the Union and the school district for the return of the toxic interest rate swap termination money paid out to Chicago Public Schools (CPS). All 16 arrestees were released last night shortly before midnight.

"Rahm has money for the banks but not for our students," said teacher Sarah Chambers, one of the arrestees. "When it's

reached a point where teachers are occupying banks to make their voices heard, it shows that we need an elected school board."

The march came two days after Mayor Rahm Emanuel's handpicked Chicago Public Schools (CPS) CEO Forrest Claypool threatened \$100 million in classroom cuts — roughly 1,000 lay-

offs — and just one day after the CTU withdrew nearly \$1 million from Bank of America. The CTU closed its BOA savings account in protest of that bank and other financial institutions that sold CPS toxic interest rate swaps [which provided hundreds of millions to the big banks from public funds — VOR Ed. Note] and are now demanding a payout of at least \$228 million — almost the exact same amount as cuts enacted by the Chicago Board of Education to schools and special education.

CPS also said that they would take 7% of our pay through the pension pickup within 30 days and redirect anti-poverty

funds to general expenses.

The Union spent fifteen months trying to get a serious offer out of the Board. After only three weeks of negotiations, CPS made an offer that (1) relied on a reduction of more than 2,000 educators from the system, (2) made no provision against ballooning class sizes as a result, and (3) included nothing but the vaguest indicators of where new revenue will be pursued.

The CTU is continuing its series of non-violent direct actions with a canvass February 5 from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. at the 95th Street Red Line station in conjunction with SEIU Healthcare Illinois & Indiana and Amalgamated Transit Union locals 241 and 308.

CTU has triple the public support of Emanuel

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, “Three times as many Chicagoans side with the teachers union as with Mayor Rahm Emanuel on how to improve public schools at a time when the two sides remain locked in contentious contract negotiations,

a *Chicago Tribune* poll has found.

“The survey also found that Emanuel’s approval rating on education has fallen to a record low as the mayor and Chicago Public Schools CEO Forrest Claypool are slashing budgets and cutting jobs in the face of the latest massive budget shortfall. Voters’ displeasure with the mayor’s handling of education tracks with the similarly low marks they gave Emanuel on his overall job performance and handling of crime.

“As CPS has faced surging pension costs and a plummeting credit rating — the district borrowed \$725 million Wednesday at an extraordinarily high interest rate to stay afloat this year — Emanuel has sought budget relief from the state. Those efforts, however, have been caught up in the Springfield stalemate. And now Governor Bruce Rauner is calling for a state takeover of CPS and suggesting the district file for bankruptcy.

“The poll found that 60 percent of Chicagoans said they side with the Chicago Teachers Union over improving schools while 20 percent backed Emanuel.”

Chicago Teachers Stand with Youth in Opposing Police Brutality

The Chicago Teachers Union’s (CTU) governing body recently voted overwhelmingly to support efforts to force Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Cook County State’s Attorney Anita Alvarez to resign from public service. This resounding call for justice came during the House of Delegates (HOD) meeting as growing local and national demands for the mayor to resign intensifies in the wake of the police killing of Laquan McDonald and the 400-day cover-up.

The House of Delegates resolution reads:

“WHEREAS, for the past five years Mayor Rahm Emanuel has made a myriad of economic disinvestments and financial mismanagements that have resulted in the infliction of educational, psychological, and physical harm to Chicago’s public schools and working-class neighborhoods; and

“WHEREAS, during his first term in office, Mayor Rahm Emanuel, by means of his hand-picked un-elected school board, closed an historic 50 public neighborhood schools in predominately Black and Latino communities; despite strong student, parent, community and CTU opposition; and

“WHEREAS, Mayor Rahm Emanuel has failed to support an education system that provides schools with the necessary resources to deliver robust wrap around services (such as counselors, nurses, social workers, and psychologists); fully-staffed libraries; reduced class sizes; and clean and safe learning conditions; and

“WHEREAS, in April 2012, Mayor Rahm Emanuel, against vehement community opposition, elected to close six of the City’s 12 mental health clinics resulting in 2,798 patients losing critical services; and

“WHEREAS, Mayor Rahm Emanuel continues to mismanage Chicagoans’ tax dollars by diverting public funds meant for blighted communities, that also can be used to fully fund our public neighborhood schools, to wealthy corporations; and

“WHEREAS, these economic disinvestments and financial

mismanagements made under the leadership of Rahm Emanuel contributed to the shocking and inexcusable murder of Laquan McDonald, a 17 year old boy suffering from severe psychological trauma, whose fate may have been altered had his mental health needs been met both in and out of school; and

“WHEREAS, Chicago and the nation continue to learn about police cover-ups, and the deliberate political maneuverings of Mayor Rahm Emanuel surrounding the October 20, 2014 death of 17 year old Laquan McDonald, shot 16 times by uniformed Chicago police officer Jason Van Dyke, who has since been indicted of first-degree murder; and

“WHEREAS, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel not only pushed for and approved the Chicago City Council to pass a \$5-million-dollar settlement to the family of Laquan McDonald, but also fought for the better part of a year, spending hundreds of thousands on legal fees to block the release of the police dashboard camera video of the fatal shooting, until a Cook County judge ruled on November 19, 2015 that this violated the state’s open records law and ordered the video to be released to the public; and

“WHEREAS, both Cook County State’s Attorney Anita Alvarez and Mayor Rahm Emanuel orchestrated and intentionally delayed the release of these videos apparently for their own political gains in order to secure victory in their 2015 re-election bids; and

“WHEREAS, the actions of both Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Cook County State’s Attorney Anita Alvarez impeded the criminal justice system, and in the process has led to the erosion of public trust and confidence in their leadership; and the only way to restore this trust is with their resignations; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the CTU support demands that Mayor Rahm Emanuel, and Cook County State’s Attorney Anita Alvarez resign immediately from public office for the unconscionable delay of

their governmental institutions in addressing Laquan McDonald's killing and other issues of excessive, unwarranted, unjustified, and lethal police force in the City of Chicago that have surfaced in the aftermath; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the CTU support demands for a public review of the incident's cover-up by a civilian police accountability council; the creation of policies to prevent such cover-ups from happening in the future; a ban on the training or arming of local

police by military institutions; and new training for the Chicago Police Department that emphasizes non-lethal ways for de-escalating the situation at hand; and be it finally

RESOLVED, that the CTU work with Illinois State Representatives La Shawn Ford, Mary Flowers and other state legislators to pass House Bill 4356, which seeks to amend the Revised Cities and Villages Act of 1941 by establishing a procedure for an election recall for the Mayor of the City of Chicago.

FEBRUARY 9, 2016

Detroit Day of Action Demands Full Funding for Schools

Join us in the fight for our children, their schools, and their teachers and school staff. Join with teachers, school employees, parents, students and community members for a rally and "walk in" outside your school to focus attention on the importance of investing in public schools. Simply pick a spot nearby your school, walk to the school together and hold a brief rally in front of the school 30-45 minutes before the start of the school day (or another agreed upon time).

Light Up the City for Public Education

Our community and students demand good schools and respect for our educators. Public education is in a state of crisis. Our schools are being starved of resources, our students are being shortchanged, and our educators are being disrespected.

Come to an Interfaith Candlelight Vigil & Unity Rally in support of our neighborhood public schools, our students, their teachers and staff.

Detroit Teachers Organizing for Rights

Detroit, Michigan teachers organized rolling sick-outs in January, to demand their rights and schools fit for teaching and learning. On January 11, 64 schools were closed as a result of the widespread support among teachers to refuse to accept such horrendous working conditions. Buildings are falling apart, many are rat and roach infested and classes have 45 students. Teachers target the state-appointed emergency manager who is not accountable to the public. As manager he has ensured debt payments to the banks, which now account for one third of the education budget. As one teacher put it, "We have watched the debt increase to ridiculous, unsustainable levels under state appointed emergency managers, while the conditions we teach in have deteriorated alarmingly." It is estimated that debt servicing is about \$1, 100 per child.

The district has had an emergency manager since 2009 and conditions have systematically worsened, as private interests like the banks get all, and the people and public good get nothing. Teachers are saying Enough is Enough and organizing to defend their rights.

Call for Public Hearings on Dangerous Learning Conditions

According to a press release from the Detroit Federation of Teachers (DFT), union "leaders and the faith community on January 11 called the toxic conditions a "travesty" that is being ignored and causing understandable angst among educators, parents and the community.

"The news conference was held in front of A.L. Holmes Elementary School, which has mice running around, wet and peeling ceilings, and broken and cracked entry steps that have been mended with wood.

"The DFT called for public hearings, where schools can describe their deplorable environmental and learning conditions that



Emergency Manager Darnell Earley has long ignored, and where Earley can detail what will be done to mitigate the problems.

"Health and safety hazards include rat and other rodent infestations, crumbling walls, holes in ceilings, cracked sidewalks, dangerous broken boilers and no heat. Poor teaching and learning conditions include overcrowded classrooms, 170 teaching vacancies, special education classrooms with no textbooks, minimal preparatory time for teachers, and lack of nurses resulting in untrained teachers forced to give medication to students suffering seizures. And there is the perpetual issue of treating long-suffering but hardworking educators unprofessionally with poor salaries and benefits. Conditions have gotten worse over the six years of state emergency management control.

"Jaime Diaz-Herrera, a parent of a student at Western International High School, said the public expects schools to provide education in an environment conducive to teaching and learning.

"I wouldn't consider a classroom of 45 kids conducive to teaching and learning. I wouldn't say that a classroom with black mold creeping up the walls is conducive to teaching and learning.

I wouldn't say that roaches and rats scampering through hallways are conducive to teaching and learning. It's disgusting, unsafe, unhealthy and not the way we should be educating our kids in Detroit or anywhere else," Diaz-Herrera said.

"A few examples of current school conditions:

"Spain Elementary-Middle School—Black mold, the gym floor is buckling, the swimming pool is broken, the boiler has problems and the garden is unusable because of debris.

"Thirkell Elementary-Middle School — Not enough teachers, so eighth-graders are housed in the gym and pulled out for instruction in core subjects for only an hour or so each day. The ceiling is so compromised that rain and snow pour in. Teachers get just one prep period a month.

"Osborn High School — The building is literally falling apart.

"Moses Field School (for students with severe cognitive impairment) —Boiler is broken, causing drastic temperature fluctuations; infestations of rats, other rodents, roaches and bed bugs; and no security guard.

"Palmer Park Preparatory Academy — Pieces of the ceiling are falling on kids' heads and rats run around.

"Jerry L. White High School — No heat, no security guard.

"Bates Academy — Security issues, mice, heating issues, computers are broken.

"Dossin Elementary-Middle School — Standing water in classrooms, holes in the ceiling, a classroom without power due to black mold in the wiring.

"Sampson Academy and Douglass Academy for Young Men — No heat.

"Ronald Brown Academy — A special education class has no textbooks; slimy growth on the walls and crumbling ceilings.

"Western International High School — Rats, roaches, not enough books, classes with 45 children.

"Golightly Education Center and Emerson Elementary-Middle School —Classes with 45 students.

"Mann Elementary School — Untrained teacher forced to administer medication to student suffering severe seizures."

Walk-ins to Support Quality Public Schools

Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools

The Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools is linking together parents, educators, students, school staff and community members in dozens of cities across the country on and around February 17 as they WALK-IN to support the quality public schools that all our students deserve.

What are Walk-Ins?

Just that! Parents, teachers and students gather out front of their school 30-45 minutes before their duty-day starts. They picket, have donuts, coffee, etc. And then they all walk in to their schools together.

Given the never-ending attacks on public education that many of our cities endure, this provides a positive action that says that these are our schools and our communities. It also builds solidarity amongst our members, as they will feel the power of collective action without risking arrest or retaliation. Walk-ins build relationships. Walk-ins build power. Walk-ins build hope.

National Message / Local Flavor

The Walk-Ins will have a national message frame something like this:

Teachers, parents and students are walking in to reclaim our schools and advocate for the public schools all children deserve.

But each individual city will have its own local focus or flavor. In Milwaukee, folks are fighting against the takeover and chartering of their schools. In San Diego, the focus is opting out of high-stakes tests. In Seattle, they're fighting for more funding. In your city, your coalition of labor and community partners will tailor your walk-in to the issue that is right for you.

What Is the Point?

The walk-ins have been used in different cities for different reasons and purposes:

During their contract campaign two years ago, The St. Paul Federation of Teachers organized walk-ins. The actions gave them the high road message of taking back our schools, and gave people courage and built confidence in their ability to pull off big collective actions. They report that the walk-in effort also gave them a very solid assessment of where their membership was at. And the district settled almost immediately afterwards because they knew a strike threat was real and that community support was on the side of educators. (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WhGsMn2OKJk> for video showing and describing a St. Paul walk-in.)

In Milwaukee (MTEA), two sets of walk-ins have protested a new law that could result in Milwaukee public schools being taken over and converted to charters. As a result of the walk-ins, by a united coalition of parents, educators and students, the power brokers are backing off. By organizing walk-ins at over 105 schools MTEA has built 105 community organizations ready to defend their public schools. The actions have also created an incredible opportunity to build a base of parents and community members who can be allies in future events. (Videos from Milwaukee walk-ins at <https://vimeo.com/129999770> and <https://vimeo.com/139705198>)

Where Will Walk-Ins Be Happening in February?

So far, the following cities have committed to coordinated walk-ins. Most cities will be walking in on February 17, but some will participate on a different day due to local schedules. The alternative date is noted in parentheses:

Atlanta, Austin, Boston, Boulder, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland Heights, Dallas, Denver, Detroit (2/9), Grand Junction, Green Bay (2/12), Hazelwood, Houston, Kalamazoo, LaCrosse, Los Angeles, Miami, Milwaukee, Newark, Patterson, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Pueblo, Racine, Ringwood, San Diego, Seattle (2/18), Solon Springs, St. Paul, and West Orange.

BUFFALO, NEW YORK

Time is NOW to Organize!

The state takeover of Buffalo's public schools continues to worsen conditions for teaching and learning, as more and more powers are given to the local receiver, Dr. Cash. He can involuntarily transfer any teacher any time and can begin doing so now. He can change the length of the school day and year and start times. He may well announce such changes February 1. According to the law, he can do this with no say so from any of those impacted — teachers, staff, students and parents. But according to we the people, he will not do this without a concerted and organized fight to defend our rights!

Elia, New York State Education Commissioner, Cash and Governor Cuomo are all striving to keep people off-balance. More and more powers are being given, as is evident from Elia's December 22 "Order" (see p.16). The powers include actions, like involuntary transfers, and firing of the entire staff of a school, that can be taken at anytime. Yet Cash refuses to say when such actions will occur and at which schools.

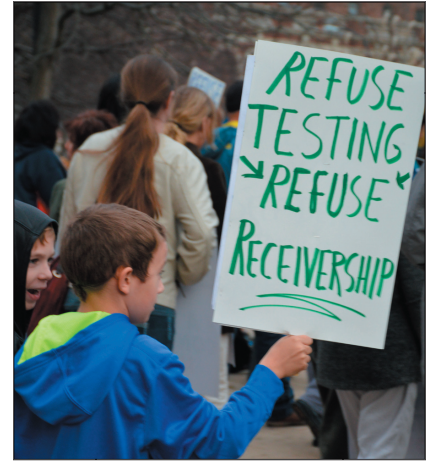
Additionally there is the confusion spread by Governor Cuomo claiming there will now be a moratorium on consequences to teachers and students based on the Common Core testing regime — yet receivership stands. Receivership is perhaps the greatest consequence from Cuomo's test and punish regime, yet it stands. Involuntary transfers are certainly a consequence, yet powers to carry them out are imposed.

All of this is to create an atmosphere of doubt and fear coupled with wait and see. Will Elia and Cash really exercise these powers? Will they fire an entire staff? Will they target union organizers and teachers speaking out for the involuntary transfers? Yes, yes and yes! The powers were created and now extended to be used. Cash will use them at a time most beneficial to him and when he expects the least resistance.

He will likely target what he considers the weakest link first, perhaps Burgard, or Futures, or one of the other five persistently struggling schools. Or he may do nothing with these schools so as to lessen resistance, especially for example to attacks on South Park, while planning with Elia to have these schools go to an independent receiver. He very likely will begin attacks on the 15 struggling schools, particularly since he has to give notice by February 1 for actions like changing the length of the school day and year. But involuntary transfers can take place anytime, with only a 15-day notice to teachers.

The issue facing teachers, students, staff and parents is that Cuomo, Elia and Cash are all in action now. We cannot wait. We must be pro-active in mounting our resistance and stepping up

our fight: *Our Schools, Our Rights, We Decide!* Important steps to strengthen organizing can be taken now. We want to ensure no teacher is left isolated facing an involuntary transfer. We want to ensure the many parents and students organizing to refusing the tests are united with those refusing receivership. The testing regime and receivership go hand in hand and those refusing must as well!



We urge all together to join organizing efforts including:

1) Develop a Refuse Receivership and Testing phone tree, among teachers and students, in each building and district-wide, beginning with receivership schools but including all schools. It is vital to unite teachers and students district-wide. Each person on the tree calls five more people, with people responsible for coordinating the tree in each building and district-wide. Such a tree would alert to any attacks at any of the schools, provide the means to call emergency actions as needed, and strengthen working relations among all concerned. If you are interested in participating in such a tree contact Buffalo Forum at 716-602-8077.

2) Establish, with teachers, students, parents and community activists, Emergency Responder Teams, prepared to immediately act at any school where involuntary transfers and/or unjust firings or other attacks occur. These responders would go to the school the very next morning, for informational pickets, leafleting, as well as issuing press releases, etc.

3) Inform fellow teachers, students and parents of the right to refuse the Common Core tests and join in distributing refusal letters at schools and events. The more students refuse the tests, the more illegitimate the test and punish regime, including receivership, becomes.

4) At school board and other meetings, denounce unjust involuntary transfers and firings without cause and demand: Smaller classes, more music, more guidance counselors and a *pay raise* consistent with the vital job teachers and staff perform!

Visit our website: usmlo.org

New York Commissioner Elia Extends Attacks on Teachers and Students to 15 More Public Schools

New York State Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia has now increased the powers of local receiver Dr. Cash for 15 more Buffalo public schools. Her "Order" came in response to demands from Cash for more powers. While Elia essentially gave Cash everything he asked for, with certain modifications, she dismissed the proposals of teachers and their union, including for smaller classes.

Among the most significant powers are those for involuntary transfers of teachers at any time, beginning now; preventing teachers from transferring; discretion and ability to modify the school schedule at any time; and extending the school day and year. These powers are in addition to those the receiver already has, such as the ability to fire the entire staff, without cause, at a receivership school, change the curriculum and programs, or convert the school to a private charter school.

Involuntary Transfers Anytime

A main demand on the receiver Dr. Cash imposed by Elia is the ability "at any time and for any constitutionally or statutorily permissible reason to involuntarily transfer teachers at the "struggling" schools regardless of seniority or status as the building union delegate," (p.34). As well, "Notice of the involuntary transfers shall be given to the affected teacher...at least 15 days prior to the effective date."

Given that the transfers can be done at any time, this means Cash could begin such actions now. The fact that this may occur is indicated in the wording of the power, which says, "with respect to involuntary transfers which take effect *during the school year* after the first two weeks of school, the teacher shall be allowed up to two days in which to make the move," [VOR emphasis]. As well, given that both Cash and Elia repeatedly refer to the need to "improve student performance" in receivership schools as "rapidly as possible," it is likely that these involuntary transfers will begin occurring soon. The "Order" does not require notification to the principal or union, just the teacher.

The "Order" also basically gives Cash power to make such involuntary transfers for any reason. He can say they are necessary to provide a "sound and basic" education to the students, a constitutional reason. Or, as Elia puts it in her "Order," he



can say it is necessary to meet the requirements of the law for improving student performance as rapidly as possible. He does not have to actually have facts to demonstrate that this is true, simply assert it. The teachers involved are given no recourse.

Cash is also given the power to prevent teachers from transferring. Teachers wishing to transfer from receivership schools must submit an application by March 23. However, the receiver can refuse the request. He must do so in writing and provide the reason. The receiver also has to make a "good faith recruitment search for a certified and qualified candidate and determine that there are no available persons qualified to perform the duties" (p.28) of the teacher requesting the transfer.

Both for involuntary transfers and blocking transfers, Elia and Cash claim these powers are necessary "in order to ensure that effective and highly effective teachers at "struggling" schools continue to teach at those schools," (p.28). Given that there is now supposed to be a moratorium on consequences to teachers from state Common Core testing, it is not clear how Cash and Elia will determine which teachers are "effective" and "highly effective." This is the language of the testing regime, which uses student test scores as the main basis for rating teachers as effective or ineffective. The Order indicates that despite the supposed moratorium, teachers and students in receivership schools face serious consequences from what even Governor Cuomo admitted were invalid tests.

The plan to impose involuntary transfers anytime is highly disruptive and creates unstable conditions, where teachers and students never know who will be next and when, and have no say in keeping teachers they consider positive and important to their schools.

Extending School Day and Year

Receiver Cash has been given powers to extend the school day and year, to change starting and ending times of the school day, and to "modify the schedule at any time...for the purpose of adding more common planning time." Cash will be able to "extend the school day and/or year at any of the struggling schools by expanding student learning time by a minimum of 200 student contact hours per year." If he lengthens them more than that, he is required to notify teachers at the given school in writing by

February 1 for the following year. Thus any or all of these 15 schools could each have different lengths of the school day and year. Teachers are to be compensated at their hourly rate for the longer school day and a proportionate increase for the school year of 1/200th of their annual salary.

In addition, receiver Cash can change the starting and ending times for each given school. At present, the earliest start time is 7:50 and the latest end time is 3:40. Cash can change these times as he sees fit. He is to do so prior to the start of the school year and the District is required to notify teachers by February 1.

Thus, all these schools may be told on February 1 that their length of day and year has changed and so too have their start and ending times. There is no requirement that they be the same for all the schools. Cash does not have this power for the non-receivership schools, so one can imagine the chaos that can ensue for parents and students as these changes are made. Certainly it will impact after school and sports activities, issues

of day care, etc.

Further, it is well established that if the longer day and year are mainly used for more testing and test preparation, there is nothing to say these changes will improve the quality of education. Indeed, they could make conditions worse. More time without regard for the content and quality of the time could very well be a waste of time.

As indicated by the refusal to demand smaller classes, or more music, or other qualities that improve education, these powers are designed to attack the rights of teachers and further remove teachers, parents, staff and students from having a say in matters of education. All together are the experts, yet we are to have no say, while Cash and Elia concentrate more and more power in their hands. Such dictate is not democratic and is directly contrary to the right of the public to decide. This decision making by teachers, staff, parents and students together is what will improve the quality of education.

States Increasingly Taking Control from Local School Boards

Lyndsey Layton, Washington Post

Lawmakers in Illinois last month pitched a bold plan for the state to seize control of the Chicago public schools, becoming one of a growing number of states that are moving to sideline local officials — even dissolve locally elected school boards — and take over urban schools.

Governors in Michigan, Arkansas, Nevada, Wisconsin, Georgia, Ohio and elsewhere say they are intervening in cases of chronic academic or financial failure... Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner's plan would wrest control of the nation's third-largest school district from elected city leaders. It was immediately opposed "100 percent" by Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel.

Eleven states have passed or debated legislation to create state-run school districts in the past year, according to the Education Commission of the States, which tracks state education policy. "There certainly is an effort afoot in the country to dismantle local government and reduce or eliminate the role of local school boards," said Thomas Gentzel, executive director of the National School Boards Association.

States are creating "recovery districts" in which they take control of large numbers of schools scattered across several districts.

Although the particulars vary, an appointed manager wields broad powers to redesign schools or close them entirely. The state manager can hire and fire, set curriculum, reconfigure the school day, sell property and, in some cases, break existing labor contracts. Increasingly, state managers are turning over traditional public schools to charter school operators, which are funded by tax dollars but are privately managed.

The move to replace locally elected school officials with outsiders has yielded questionable results. Takeovers in Newark,

Detroit and Memphis have not improved test scores — in fact, some schools have gone backward.

Kent McGuire, president and chief executive of the Southern Education Foundation, which recently analyzed state takeovers in three states said, "You can't really find evidence that there's been positive, sustainable changes in learning in those places."

And the takeovers have sparked angry protests, legal challenges and bitter complaints of racism. All state takeovers to date have occurred in school districts that are impoverished and majority African American and Latino.

"These proposals are not really about school reform or improvement," said Philip Lanoue, the 2015 national Superintendent of the Year. He runs a school district in Georgia, where Gov. Nathan Deal wants to change the state constitution to enable state takeovers. "These takeovers are entangled with money and power and control."

In Georgia, Deal wants to create an Opportunity School District made up of as many as 100 "low-performing" schools from across his state. But voters first have to amend the state constitution, which currently stipulates that education must be controlled by "that level of government closest and most responsive to the taxpayers and parents of the children being educated." If the referendum passes in November, Atlanta would be most affected, with 27 eligible struggling schools. [...]

One elementary school in Clarke County, Lanoue's district, would be a candidate for takeover. He said lasting improvement doesn't come from a top-down makeover. "If you really wanted true reform, wouldn't you work directly with school boards and the school system?" he said.

Youngstown, Ohio

One of the most contentious takeovers has been the seizure of the Youngstown City Schools in Ohio, which Governor Kasich's administration orchestrated behind closed doors.

Youngstown has been struggling since the collapse of the steel industry in the 1970s. Nearly all the district's 5,100 students are low-income, and 1 in 5 have special needs.

In the summer of 2014, Tom Humphries, president of the Youngstown/Warren Regional Chamber of Commerce and a Governor Kasich supporter, said the governor told him to devise a plan to fix the schools. "This is about these kids," said Humphries. "They only get one opportunity, and this is about their lives. We can't keep doing the same things. They're not working."

He launched 10 months of secret meetings between top Kasich administration officials and a handful of community leaders, including the Youngstown schools superintendent and the president of Youngstown State University.

Participants' notes released by the state show the members pledging secrecy out of concern for anticipated public resistance. After nearly a year of discussions, the Kasich administration unveiled plans for a turbocharged state takeover that includes the dissolution of the locally elected school board and appointment of a chief executive officer with broad powers over local schools. A special commission controlled by Kasich appointees is expected to name a chief executive next month.

The administration and its allies in the state legislature rushed the legislation, getting it approved by a committee and narrowly passed by both houses of the legislature less than 24 hours after it was made public.

Members of the elected Youngstown school board said they were blindsided. "None of our community was involved in this, period," said Brenda Kimble, president of the Youngstown City Schools board of education, which is suing to stop the takeover. "No board members, no parents, no elected officials, no teaching staff. Nobody knew about this."

The Rev. Kenneth Simon, a Baptist pastor involved with Youngstown schools, said the changes concentrate power in a new chief executive who is not accountable to the community, something that could be especially damaging to African Americans.

"They're taking away the right of our own school board that we elected to govern," he said. "The school board has no power," he said. "The community has no say. I don't know how African Americans could sit and let them roll the clock back like this."

The law applies not just to Youngstown but to any Ohio school district that receives an F grade from the state three years in a row.

"This isn't just something happening in this small city in Ohio," said one Ohio lawmaker. "This is going to happen in other school districts in Ohio, and it's happening all over the country. It's a systematic approach to privatize public education."

State Takeover Models Have Not Proven Effective

Southern Education Foundation

State control over public schools or school districts is not new. Individual schools, or entire districts (Philadelphia, Newark and others) have been seized by state education departments for financial reasons, academic performance, or both.

Despite more than two decades of state takeovers, these schools and districts have shown little improvement.

Georgia's proposed Opportunity School District (OSD) is based on a different approach. The OSD would create a new, state-run school district composed solely of "low-performing" schools from all across Georgia. These schools would be managed by appointed state officials, closed, or turned over to private management (in the form of charter schools) as determined by the OSD superintendent. As many as 20 schools could be brought in to the OSD each year, and the district would have the authority to include as many as 100 schools at any given time. Schools that are chartered would be transferred to the State Charter School Commission for oversight.

Three states have experimented with takeover districts to date. *None has demonstrated sustained improvement in student outcomes across the board, and each has raised additional concerns. (* In addition to Georgia, the legislatures of Wisconsin and Nevada passed state takeover legislation in 2015. These districts are not yet in operation.)

Louisiana

Louisiana established its Recovery School District (RSD) in 2003. While the RSD is technically a state-wide district, the vast majority of the 57 schools overseen by the RSD are in New Orleans. Of the 110 schools taken over by the RSD, all have either been shut down or turned over to charter operators, making the Recovery School District the only all-charter district in the country. [...]

The well-respected Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education (SCOPE) ... found that the reforms in New Orleans have created a set of schools that are highly stratified by race, class and educational advantage, and offer highly segregated experiences accordingly. They found that students' academic and disciplinary experiences are largely dependent on where, in this hierarchy of schools, they land. Many schools have continued to struggle with poor performance, posting among the lowest achievement and graduation rates in the state.

The SCOPE review also found that school quality and accountability are impeded by the lack of a strong central system (within the RSD) to support instructional improvement or maintain safeguards to ensure equity and access to a reasonable quality of education.

In addition, the majority of parents complain of long commutes, confusing and irrational enrollment procedures, extremely high rates of student push-outs and difficulty finding schools that

will serve students with special needs. Some parents who have managed to get their children into the RSD's higher echelon of charters are content.

In short, the Recovery School District, which was marketed (and continues to be lauded) as ushering in a miraculous transformation in New Orleans, has not kept its promise to some of the country's most disadvantaged students.

Tennessee

Tennessee created its Achievement School District (ASD) in 2010 (the first schools opened in 2012). This year, the ASD oversees 29 schools, 24 of which have been converted to charters. As in Louisiana, the schools are highly geographically and demographically concentrated. All but two are located in Memphis (the other two are in Nashville), and all serve large majorities of African American students.

The ASD, which is committed to converting the majority of takeover schools to charters through contracts with national charter networks, has had a difficult time finding and keeping corporate charter chains in the mix. Three operators — the KIPP network, Los Angeles-based Green Dot, and Memphis-based Freedom Prep — all pulled out of ASD management consideration in 2014 (some have since been wooed back to taking on schools). The first Superintendent of the ASD, Chris Barbic, himself the CEO of a national charter network, resigned in the early summer of 2015, conceding that transforming neighborhood schools (as compared to establishing new charters, more able to select their students) was harder than he had imagined.

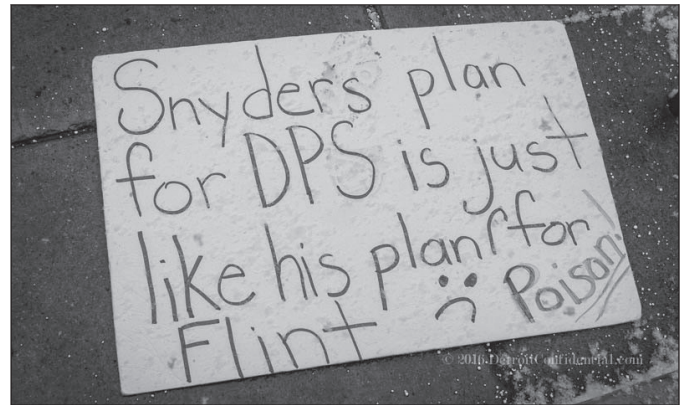
Student performance in the majority of ASD schools has been uneven and in some cases, has actually declined. Indeed, the overall performance of a local, district-led reform initiative in Memphis, has been stronger than the ASD schools. In addition, the district — as in New Orleans — is contending with parent frustration.

Chris Caldwell, a member of the Shelby County (Tennessee) School Board noted that the state had “underestimated” the community's loyalty to the local district. “The way that (ASD) was implemented, it gave the families a feeling that they were being punished or isolated from the rest of the school system because of the performance of the school,” Caldwell told the *Commercial Appeal*.

Michigan

Michigan has the third operational state takeover district — the Education Achievement Authority (EAA) — created in 2013. Ironically, the EAA plucked its 15 schools, all in Detroit, from a district that was already under state management, and doing poorly. Three of the 15 EAA schools have now been converted to charters.

The EAA touted a new blended learning model in its schools, and contracted with a corporate vendor to provide computers and software to each student. A year later, the state admitted that the initiative had been a miserable failure. Teacher turnover within the EAA was high, leaving many classrooms without teachers. Newly



hired Teach for America recruits walked off the job mid-year.

District finances were in shambles as well, leading the Governor to appoint an emergency manager for the state-run district. Student achievement has actually declined in the schools.

The EAA is “an unfettered, corporate-driven education scheme that focuses less on educational outcomes and more on profits.” Michigan State Senator Bert Johnson said in a letter to U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, May 6, 2013.

Far from standing as beacons for what is possible when schools are brought under top-down control, the experiences with state-run improvement districts in Louisiana, Michigan and Tennessee have been troubling at best. Student academic performance has not improved across the board (where outcomes are up, research suggests the schools have utilized selection procedures that weed out more disadvantaged or academically struggling students). Parents and communities have consistently objected to the loss of local authority and subsequent chaos, which has been imposed exclusively on already disenfranchised communities of color.

A 2015 report by the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools found that state takeover districts overwhelmingly target African American and low-income communities, leaving citizens disenfranchised and disconnected from those making the decisions about their children's education.

There is also growing recognition that state-run districts are being promoted by charter advocacy organizations as a way to facilitate the conversion of traditional public schools to charter schools — conversions that are often opposed by local parents and communities. Indeed, the vast majority of schools that have been taken in to the three existing state improvement districts have been subsequently turned over to charter operators. Leslie Jacobs, who was a key force behind the creation of the Recovery School District in Louisiana, has acknowledged that the mission of the district was always to turn schools over to charter operators.

Even if the proposed constitutional amendment in Georgia is passed by voters in November of 2016, it is likely that the Georgia Opportunity School District will be contentious and considered suspect by many across the state.

But the larger question is whether state control and chartering are the right answers to the urgent need for stronger educational outcomes in Georgia's high-needs public schools. The research points in a different direction.

I • Defend Haitian Resistance

elections considering the threats against the electoral infrastructure and on the population who would have to go vote,” CEP president Pierre-Louis Opont announced at a news conference. First round legislative elections were held in August 2015 and first round presidential elections October 25, 2015. The second-round presidential elections, initially planned for December 27, had already been delayed twice before the latest postponement.



We will not obey!

The U.S. pumped an estimated \$33 million into the election campaign, backing those close to Martelly that the U.S. wanted in office. After the first round of voting, on October 25, the election commission announced that the government’s candidate, Jovenel Moïse, had come in first with 32.81 percent of the vote. Moïse almost certainly got less than 10 percent, and widespread ballot stuffing was verified by the National Human Rights Defense Network and other local groups. It is estimated that 92% of vote tally sheets had serious irregularities. The massive fraud was also confirmed by Haiti’s election verification commission.

The indefinite postponement occurred when Haitians across the country took to the streets in their thousands during the week leading up to the scheduled vote to demand the complete cancellation of the elections given the massive fraud. Chanting what has become a slogan of the movement, “Nou Pap Obeyi!” (“We will not obey”). The overwhelming evidence that the votes were rigged has brought even more protesters into the streets, demanding Martelly resign before his term ends on February 7, 2016. Voice of Revolution joins Haitians in demanding *U.S. Out of Haiti! Free and Fair Elections with no Foreign Interference!*

The U.S. persists in supporting Martelly and the fraud. The U.S. also continues to condemn the protesters and the Haitian demand for Martelly to resign now. State Department spokesman Kenneth Merten was quoted by *Haiti Libre*: “What is not a good thing,” Merten said, “is seeing people out on the streets and creating disruption and intimidation, that is not acceptable in our view.”

The foreign countries occupying and interfering in Haiti’s internal affairs — the U.S. foremost, along with former colonizer France and others — have not been able to get away with declaring the people’s support for their regimes due to the people’s resistance. Instead of recognizing the Haitian people for their determination to ensure that elections are not a mechanism to legitimize a foreign *coup d’etat* and their disempowerment, these countries present Haitians’ resistance to the fraudulent elections as the problem.

The daughters and sons of slaves who liberated themselves from their colonial oppressors more than two hundred years ago

continue to defend that historic victory. It is one that to this day the U.S. has never forgiven them for and continues to punish them for, as it occurred when the U.S. system of slavery was still in place.

The U.S. installed and backed the Duvalier dictators and their death squads for decades, more recently used a coup to remove elected President Jean Bertrand Aristide in 2004, and now more electoral fraud and interference, using non-

governmental organizations and so-called aid. The current stand of the Haitian people against another electoral coup is a continuation of their centuries-long fight against repeated attempts to enslave them.

While the U.S. routinely talks about free and fair elections and transparency, the elections they conduct, at home and in Haiti, are anything but! This includes previous efforts to ban the largest political party and social movement in the country, Lavalas, from participating.

According to the Constitution, current Haitian President Michel Martelly is empowered until February 7, after which it is not clear what will take place. Haitians are now mobilizing to ensure that the U.S. cannot block the people’s forces from playing their decisive role in politics, including any future electoral process. This includes the Lavalas political movement.

The countries organized in what is called the “Core Group” on Haiti with the U.S., France and Canada at the head are now positioning themselves in hopes of not losing control over the political process.

Voice of Revolution calls on all to demand the *U.S. Get Out of Haiti!* and stand shoulder to shoulder with the Haitian people in their fight to determine their own affairs without any foreign interference. Remain ready to oppose whatever efforts the U.S. makes to intervene and further undermine democracy and resistance in Haiti.

Who Said What

Fanmi Lavalas

In a statement issued after the cancellation of the January 24 vote, Haitian political party Lavalas applauded the Haitian people and called on them to continue their mobilizations for sovereignty and dignity.

“[...] Fanmi Lavalas bows deeply to the courage and dignity of the Haitian people, who managed to slow this infernal electoral coup. Congratulations for this victory! We will never stop mobilizing and showing our commitment for a true democracy in the country, and this was done once again after their failure of

December 27 and January 17 of the key elements of the electoral coup, the Provisional Electoral Council and the [political party] Tèt Kale and the international community (Core Group) — on January 24, 2016. [...]

Lavalas pointed out that “the battle is not over. The electoral coup is not finished. Right now, it is the same coup that takes another form. The conspirators are trying to continue with a second round [...] while the report of the Presidential Commission of Electoral Evaluation shows clear evidence of fraud and serious irregularities. This is the same massive fraud that Fanmi Lavalas had denounced after its visit to the tabulation center on 21 and 22 November 2015.”

“[...] Fanmi Lavalas continues to require an independent verification commission to provide the Haitian people the truth about the results of the polling day 25 October and to allow the continuation of the electoral process. The formation of this Commission, its mandate and the agenda should be prepared in consultation with all sectors of the opposition. Fanmi Lavalas asks for the dismissal of the Electoral Council of [Pierre-Louis] Opont.

“Fanmi Lavalas will quickly sit with parties, political organizations, and all other sectors in the country to provide a response to the political crisis and prepare for the continuation of the electoral process in Haiti for a legitimate government that will work for the country to regain its sovereignty and dignity.

“Fanmi Lavalas declares that the mobilization must not stop because the coup machine has not stopped yet: each neighborhood, each zone, each department take up your responsibilities. Fanmi Lavalas continues to support all mobilizations across the country.”

Jude Célestin

The candidate who was declared the runner-up in the first presidential round held in October, Jude Célestin, called the cancellation “a victory.” Célestin had refused to participate in the runoff. He called the October results “a ridiculous farce” and demanded that the recommendations of the country’s elections verification commission be enacted to improve transparency in the runoff.

“Core Group”

The “Core Group” is comprised of the ambassadors of the U.S., France and Canada, as well as of Brazil (which heads the UN’s “peacekeeping stabilization” military mission in Haiti known as MINUSTAH), the EU and Spain and the Special Representatives of the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations Secretary General in Haiti.

In a statement on behalf of the “Core Group,” the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Haiti and political head of MINUSTAH Sandra Honoré said that it “continued [its] support for the conclusion of an inclusive and equitable electoral process while supporting efforts aimed at finding a way forward that ensures the democratic renewal of State institutions.

“The ‘Core Group’ continues to extend its full support for efforts to find consensual and constructive solutions to Haiti’s ongoing governance challenges, through elections and through dialogue among interested parties.

“The members of the ‘Core Group’ deplore the recent acts of

electoral violence and call on the national authorities, political parties, candidates and supporters, and the electorate in general to participate in the electoral process with responsibility and restraint, so that the people of Haiti can express their will in a climate free of intimidation and violence.”

Similar statements deploring “violence” and saying nothing about the rampant electoral fraud the Haitian people have been protesting were issued by the “Core Group” member states.

United States

U.S. State Department Special Coordinator for Haiti Kenneth Merten was quoted by *Haiti Libre* as saying, “Realistically speaking [...] we may be looking at some sort of temporary solution until there is a handover to a new elected president. Our fear is that we go into a situation that is open ended [...] In our analysis that is a dangerous place to go.”

“What is not a good thing,” Merten said, “is seeing people out on the streets and creating disruption and intimidation, that is not acceptable in our view. We are watching it very carefully, we are very concerned; we hope that dialogue between the candidates, the president and the president of the Senate and others can come to a solution.” He indicated the U.S. wants to see new elections take place quickly but did not specify that they should occur before February 7, when the Constitution requires that Martelly, who has been ruling by decree for over a year, step down.

U.S. State Department spokesperson Mark Toner also made the issue one of “violence,” saying the U.S. “expects that persons responsible for organizing, financing, or participating in electoral intimidation and violence will be held accountable in accordance with Haitian law.”

France

During a press briefing on January 26, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development issued a statement that “France expresses its concern following the deferral, for security reasons, of the second round of presidential and legislative elections. It condemns the violence of the last few days and is committed to the rapid conclusion of the electoral process begun in August 2015.

“We call on the parties to reach compromises that make it possible to conclude this last step in the electoral process in a peaceful climate that respects the voters’ choices.

“Given the severity of the economic, social and humanitarian challenges facing Haiti, working in a united fashion to bring about recovery is more necessary than ever.

“As a partner and friend of Haiti, France renews its commitment to support it on this path.”

Canada

On January 24, Stéphane Dion, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of International Development and La Francophonie issued a most cynical statement raising concern about the postponement. Their statement did not raise any concern whatsoever for the fraud that characterized the earlier rounds of the legislative and presidential elections in Haiti. Instead, it placed the

blame on the Haitian people who refuse to accept that a second round election be based on earlier fraudulent results.

“Canada is closely monitoring the electoral process in Haiti and deplores the violent acts of the past few days, which have led the country’s Provisional Electoral Council to postpone the elections that should have been held today,” the statement said.

“Canada regrets the lack of willingness to achieve consensus in pursuing the electoral process, which has resulted in the current crisis and to the suspension of the electoral calendar.”

Showing the Canadian government’s determination to impose an outcome which the Haitian people reject, the statement added: “Concluding the second round of presidential elections is essential to Haiti’s stability and to the upholding of Haitians’ democratic rights.

Le Devoir also reports that Canada invested \$20 million in the current Haitian elections, including close to \$11 million through the UN Program for Development for the actual holding of the elections and \$9 million paid to the U.S. National Democratic Institute (NDI) “which supports Haitian civil society organizations” for electoral observers.



Brazil

The Government of Brazil also issued a statement “condemning the recent episodes of violence in the country” and “urg[ing] the Haitian political forces to repudiate, unequivocally, the use of violence.” It called for those participating in the presidential elections to “work together in search of a consensus with a view to the prompt resumption and early conclusion of the electoral process.” Brazil concluded by “reaffirm[ing] its permanent solidarity and commitment with the cause of a democratic and stable Haiti, according to the sovereign will of the Haitian people and in consultation with the United Nations and other countries and organizations associated with such goal.”

United Nations

In response to the postponement, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon’s spokesman Stephane Dujarric said, “The Secretary-General [...] strongly urges all stakeholders to work towards the peaceful completion of the electoral process without delay, through the forging of a consensual solution that will allow the people of Haiti to exercise their right to vote for the election of a new president and the remaining representatives of the new Parliament.”

The observer missions of the European Union and the Organization of American States also issued a similar appeal, while condemning “the acts of violence across the country” that Provisional

Electoral Council President Pierre Louis-Opont cited as the reason for postponing the January 24 vote.

Organization of American States

At the request of Haitian President Michel Martelly, the Organization of American States (OAS) convened an extraordinary session of its Permanent Council on January 27 in response to the cancellation of the January 24 vote.

In convening the special meeting, OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro said, “Despite the critical situation Haiti is facing, it is absolutely necessary we contribute to mold a democratic solution out of this conundrum. In that regard, a representative and plural transition government with a pre-established exit date should be constituted. The legitimacy and sustainability of this transition government will be guaranteed with the participation and commitment of all major political and social stakeholders. One of the immediate purposes of this transition government is to restore political and social stability to the country and to build minimum trust between political actors. From this standpoint, the transition government will then need to work on improving conditions to restore the electoral process and authority’s credibility.”

At the meeting, Haiti’s permanent representative to the OAS said that President Martelly’s request that the OAS send a high-level mediation mission to Haiti was not an appeal for interference, but a “call to solidarity” so that Haiti would “avoid falling into political chaos.”

The OAS subsequently announced that a mission would be sent. Its work will include engaging in “a dialogue with all appropriate parties” with the mandate and limits under which it will act to be set by “the legitimate government of Haiti at this moment.” It added that “any other action beyond that would be an intervention that Haiti does not want, and that we want even less.”

Current OAS chairman, Ronald Sanders, the Permanent Representative of Antigua, said that without the intervention of the OAS there would be “utter bloodshed” in Haiti.

Meanwhile, former OAS Special Representative to Haiti, Ricardo Seitenfus of Brazil warned against such an intervention, calling it “a very bad idea.” In 2010 Seitenfus was relieved of his post a day after speaking out against interference in the elections held that year by the same countries trying to impose their will on Haiti today. He is quoted in the *Huffington Post* as saying the OAS duped Haiti in the elections of 2010 and 2011 and was part of the problem, and could not be associated with attempts to find a solution. “If I have any advice to give to the international community,” Seitenfus said, “it is to listen to Haitian actors. Without a Haitian solution to the Haitian crisis, there is no salvation.”

As Tens of Thousands Foil Fraudulent Elections the Martelly Regime Begins Deploying Death Squads

Kim Ives

On Friday, January 22, many thousands marched over ten miles up Port-au-Prince's Delmas Road to Pétionville then back down the Bourdon Road to the capital's central square to demand new elections and denounce a government ban on demonstrations that was to begin that midnight.

The marching, chanting multitude scared the daylight out of Haiti's Pétionville elite, loudly pouring into the narrow, tiny streets of the wealthy mountain enclave while young men scattered large rocks and telephone poles across roadways and set aflame cars and columns of tires.

The tumultuous day forced Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council (CEP), six of whose nine members have now resigned in disgrace or disgust, to indefinitely cancel the third round of widely denounced [legislative and presidential] elections, which had been scheduled for Jan. 24.

The Police's Company for Intervention and Maintenance of Order (CIMO) armored vehicles shadowed the marchers on side-streets throughout the afternoon, occasionally engaging them with shots in the air or teargas, but mostly they put out fires with their water cannon trucks and made a show of force in front of ministries and embassies the marchers passed.

Despite the CEP's announcement, the Haitian masses have continued marching in cities throughout Haiti on every day since last Friday's historic march, emboldened by their victory and calling for the immediate departure of President Michel Martelly and the United Nations military occupation troops known as MINUSTAH. Martelly is constitutionally required to step down on February 7.

However, the Martelly regime is now planning to deploy death-squads against the popular uprising and opposition leaders, according to a source in the Haitian National Police (PNH).

The government is also spending tens of thousands of dollars in a bid to buy the allegiance of sectors of the population during the celebratory days leading up to Carnaval, which falls this year on Tuesday, February 9, two days after Martelly is supposed to resign.

According to a reliable PNH source, on Mon., Jan. 25, a police officer called "Chariot" assigned to the PNH's Presidential Guard and Security Unit (USP) received at the National Palace weapons, four Prado SUVs, and money to sow trouble in the capital's largest slum, Cité Soleil, and the semi-rural suburb north of the capital, La Plaine.

According to the source, Chariot has the collaboration in the USP of a former Lavalas activist named "Yabout," who will be a key actor in the planned terror.

Chariot also gave two Galil rifles to a paramilitary thug known as "Noé" (Noah) to murder anti-Martelly people in La Plaine and Croix des Bouquets, the police source said.

Chariot himself lives in the area of Papo in the capital district of Croix des Missions and owns a nightclub called "Scandale

Disco" in the Anba Mapou area of Croix des Missions.

Among the people to be targeted by Chariot's assassins are Rony Colin, the new mayor of Croix des Bouquets, supposedly elected in the contested polling under the

banner of the Palmis Party, and Caleb Desrameaux, the similarly elected deputy of Tabarre, from the Vérité (Truth) Party. The assassins would try to make it look like the anti-Martelly opposition was responsible for the murders, according to the police source.

On the morning of Tuesday, Jan. 26 in Croix des Mission, partisans of Martelly's Haitian Bald Headed Party (Tet Kale — PHTK) blocked the main artery to Haiti's north, National Highway No. 1, by disabling a tractor-trailer truck in front of the Damiens Bridge. Until [the afternoon of January 26], when this report was written, the truck was still blocking the road and any northbound traffic.

The PNH reportedly received instructions not to intervene if PHTK partisans block roads or demonstrate, our police source said.

According to another anonymous source close to the PNH, the PHTK has distributed 300 million gourdes (\$51,000) to mobilize support for the Martelly government in a demonstration scheduled for Jan. 28. The action was originally planned for January 26 but was called off at the last minute. [The January 28 demonstration did go ahead —VOR Ed. Note.]

Meanwhile, Guy Philippe, the leader of the paramilitary "rebel" force which helped overthrow former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004, has declared that he and his partisans "will divide the country" and "are ready for war" against the "anarchists" who stopped the vote, according to Reuters. A former Haitian cop and soldier, Philippe is today a Senate candidate in the now-postponed run-off and a close Martelly ally. He has been holed up in the picturesque southwestern seaside town of Pestel since 2004, and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) has made two half-hearted attempts to arrest him in the last decade. Each time, the accused drug trafficker supposedly could not be found.

As the battle lines in Haiti draw up, the "Group of Eight" [G8] opposition presidential candidates, who contest the results that put the PHTK's Jovenel Moïse in the lead with 33% of the vote, issued



their proposal on January 24 for the provisional government that would take over when Martelly steps down. They proposed the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court be named President (as dictated by the 1987 Constitution) and choose a “consensus” prime minister with a cabinet of “no more than 15 ministers” chosen from Haiti’s “known political personalities.”

This provisional government would then set in place a five-member “independent commission of inquiry” drawn from the leading organizations of the media, human rights, women, the university, and national election observers. After reviewing the results of the elections’ violence-and-fraud-plagued first two rounds [of the legislative elections on] August 9 and October 25 [and the first round of the presidential election on October 25], the commission of inquiry would then “recommend to the provisional government of consensus all the measures deemed useful and

susceptible to reestablish trust.”

The G8 also proposed that the illegally sworn-in parliamentarians determined by the independent commission of having won their seats fraudulently would be “ejected” and the CEP would be reconstituted.

In light of the bloody repression being prepared by the Martelly regime, the G8’s moderate and half-step recommendations are likely to enrage the masses, who are chanting “we want revolution” as they march. The last proposal will surely be found particularly galling: “To guarantee the protection of the members of the Tet Kale (Bald Headed) executive against all harassing and wrongful prosecution.”

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We Will Not Obey

A Call for Solidarity from Haiti’s Popular Movement

Reflecting on the voting rights struggle led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and so many other courageous fighters for justice fifty years ago in the US; on the one person one vote struggle led by Mandela’s comrades in South Africa; reflecting on struggles everywhere, we came to the conclusion that a people can’t be sovereign if they don’t have the right to vote. No people can retain their dignity if their vote does not count. As clearly stated by President Aristide: “If we don’t protect our dignity, our dignity will escape us!” That is why we struggle and ask that people the world over with a history of struggle stand in solidarity with us.

Six years after the earthquake that jolted the country, causing the death of hundreds of thousands of Haitians, we, Haitian organizations, in the context of reflection, take our hats off and humbly say to the people all over the planet who opened their hearts to us, “We have not forgotten your acts of solidarity”. The sharing impulse manifested by people the world over, should have helped the Haitian people to rebuild their environment, rebuild their lives. Pity! To this day, the people’s lot has not changed. Adding insult to injury, shameless characters, local slave owners, empowered by various international organizations, hijacked the reconstruction funds.

Right after the earthquake, the internationals took advantage of our momentary state of helplessness to occupy the political space. Today, the Haitian people are engaged in an all out struggle to reclaim that space and to exercise their right to vote. The very ones who hijacked the reconstruction money want to prevent the people from choosing their government, in a wide scale conspiracy to continue the looting of the country’s resources. Subsequent to many schemes designed to remove the people from the political equation, local colonialists joined forces with international colonialists to force the people to accept choices against their best interests. Illegitimate officials implemented urban removal plans and land grabs, assaulting both the middle-class, as well as the

poorer classes, putting the country on the brink of collapse. The people’s resistance slowed down the “terror apparatus,” preventing it from completing this program. Now they want to put more false officials at the helm of the government to continue their assault.

The blatant violence perpetrated in Ile-a-Vache, the hideous massacres perpetrated on the people of Arcahaie, the continuous massacre of the people of Cité Soleil because they manifest a will to vote, various acts of aggression perpetrated throughout the country, in the context of land-grab or voter suppression, convince the Haitian people that they are in a fight for their very existence. We say *No, We Will Not Obey Illegitimate Officials*. Self-defense is a legitimate universal law. Civil-Disobedience is an accepted universal right when a people confronts an illegal regime. The right to elect a government is universally accepted as a way for a people to protect its existence. Today, confronted by the danger presented by local and international colonialists, the Haitian people have started a *resistance for existence* movement. They ask for people to people solidarity from everywhere on the planet. The local and international colonialists’ plan is not an earthquake, yet it has caused far more damage to the country.

Our experience of the six years since the earthquake is no different than the experience of other small countries with natural and human resources. The internationals loot, have an orgy, while the international media turns a blind eye to lies spread by “their” ambassadors in their country’s name. The Haitian army, now being rebuilt to oppress the people, is a gift to the Haitian people by the Organization of American States (OAS). The Cholera epidemic and the blood thirsty and corrupt Haitian Police were United Nations (UN) gifts to the Haitian people. The Media is mute, as the country nears total collapse. We say *No, We Will Not Obey*. We will not dig our own graves. We would rather tell the truth and expose the conspiracy.

(January 2016)