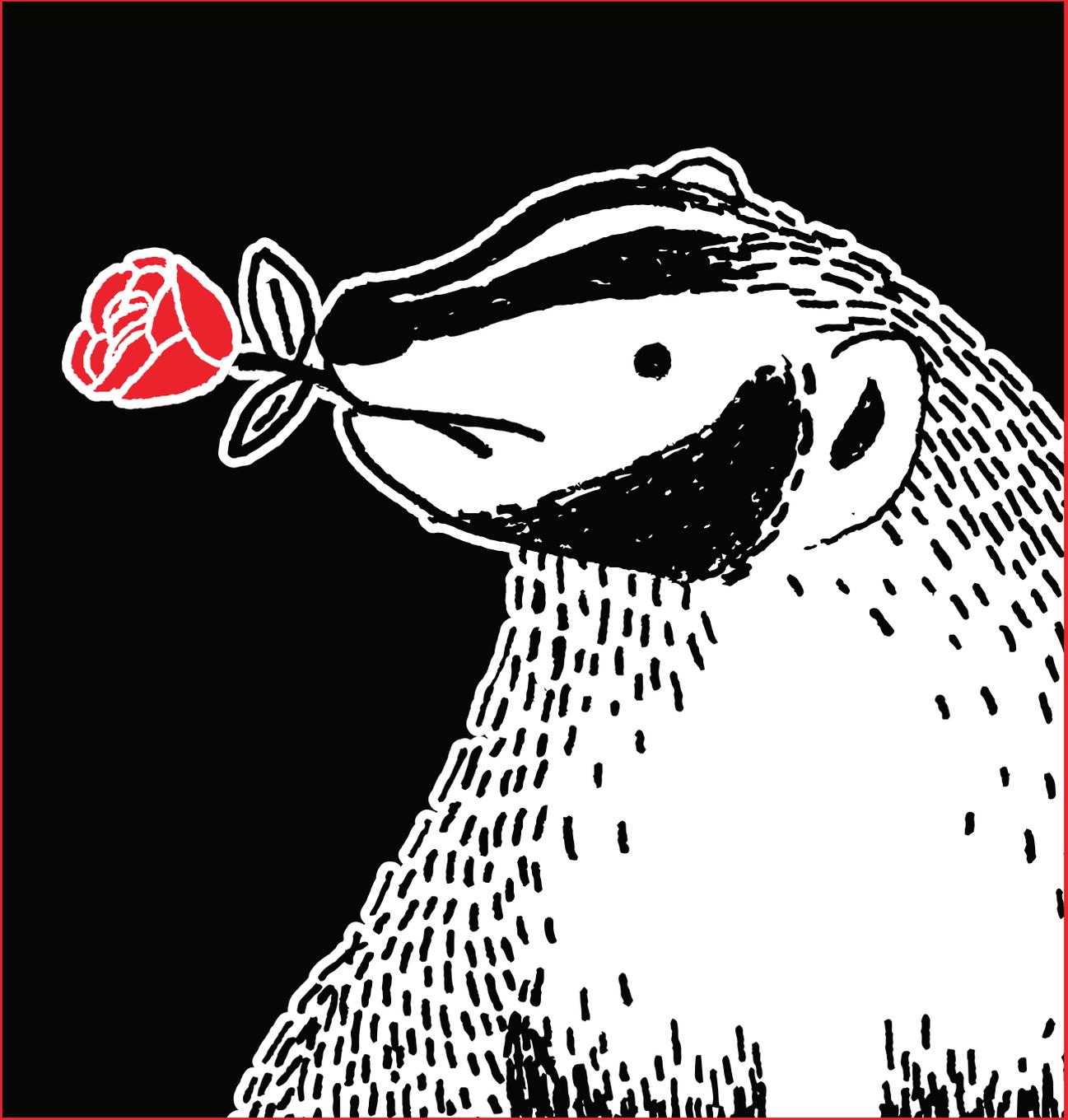




REDMADISON

Newsletter of the Madison Area DSA

JANUARY 2020



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No War With Iran!

A coalition of left and anti-war groups speak out after Trump's assassination of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani.



Protestors expressed their shock, dismay and anger in response to the U.S. assassination of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani.

On Saturday, January 4th at noon, at least a hundred activists representing a cross section of anti-war and political groups gathered on the steps of the Capitol to oppose a potential war with Iran.

The event was organized by several leftist organizations in Madison, including the DSA and featured speakers who took turns speaking out against the clear act of aggression against Iran. The protesters held signs that were clear and to the point: *"No war with Iran!"*

The turn-out was a quick response to the shocking action. Activists plan further events and will try to build a popular response in coming weeks.

DSA's own Shaadie Ali spoke at the protest:

“*The history of Iran-US relations is a story of horrific cruelty on the part of the Americans that dispossess and terrorize the Iranian people. From the start of the Cold War on, any meaningful attempt by the Iranian people to exert control over their political future was met with brutal repression on the part of the Americans, starting with the election of Mohammed Mossadegh in 1953. When the newly elected Prime Minister Mossadegh attempted to assert control over the ownership of oil production in 1952 (which nominally paid out 85% of profits to Great Britain and 15% to Iran, but in practice probably paid less), Great Britain imposed an embargo. President Truman agreed to this embargo, and in 1953, the CIA and Great Britain staged a coup d'état based out of the US Embassy.*

The CIA and MI6 then reinstalled Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi as the Head of State, who Great Britain and the Soviet Union jointly deposed a decade earlier on the suspicion that he had Nazi sympathies. To consolidate the Shah's tenuous position over an extremely resentful

Iranian populace, the CIA helped develop and train a brutal secret police force named SAVAK. During the '60s and into the '70s, SAVAK tortured and killed thousands of political dissidents. According to the Federation of American Scientists, some of SAVAK's favorite methods included "electric shock, whipping, beating, inserting broken glass and pouring boiling water into the body, and the extraction of teeth and nails." Popular resistance to the Shah mostly took the form of either communism or Islamism. Though anyone who opposed the Shah was liable to be tortured, the worst forms were generally reserved for communists, with SAVAK and the Shah probably underestimating Islamism in retrospect. As popular resistance mounted in the late '70s, leftists and Islamists often joined coalitions to fight against the Shah. They struck hard and fast, catching both the Shah and his American allies completely off-guard. The Shah fled Iran and was granted entry to the United States for cancer treatment despite the request of revolutionaries that he be extradited. A group of revolutionary students, meanwhile, remembering that the US embassy was instrumental in the 1953 coup and many, many coups in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, retaliated by seizing the US embassy and holding the 52 Americans residing there hostage.

The hostages were eventually released, and the Americans released some of the Iranian assets they froze in

retaliation.

The United States went on to support both Iran and Saddam's Iraq in the Iran-Iraq war, an eight-year-long war lasting from 1980 to 1988 that cost hundreds of thousands of lives on both sides and included genocides. In the final weeks of the war, the US Navy shot down an Iranian commercial plane over Iranian airspace, killing 290 civilians. The United States never apologized for this. Over the coming days, you'll hear discussion of Iranian "aggression" against American military targets, but none of those incidents produced as many civilian casualties as the murder of 290 people whose only crime was flying on an Iranian airline.

[...] The Obama administration was able to secure a deal with the Iranian government. The US would agree to lift the international sanctions on the Iranian economy that devalued their currency by 80% and a 30% decrease in drug imports from Europe and the United States. In exchange, Iran would agree to more stringent limits on their uranium enrichment and allow international inspectors to inspect their facilities on very short notice to ensure compliance. In 2018, Trump withdrew from the agreement and reimposed those sanctions despite Iranian compliance. The Senate then agreed in a 98-2 vote to impose further sanctions on Iran. The effects have been devastating. The cost



An Iranian revolutionary holds up books on Lenin and the Russian Revolution, circa 1979.

of meat has gone up by 116%. Hundreds have been killed in food riots. People regularly die due to shortages in cancer treatment drugs. And now, the United States assassinates one of the most decorated generals in Iranian history.

[...] Iran isn't perfect--no country is. And no, General Qasem Soleimani wasn't perfect either. But at every turn regardless of President, Iran finds a United States government that is dishonest, cruel, violent, and acts in completely bad faith. Iran is dealing with a state which is free to bomb their airliners, overthrow their prime ministers and cripple their economy the second they attempt to control their national destiny. No war in Iran, yes, but also no sanctions against Iran, no extrajudicial killings in Iran or Iraq, and no supporting Jihadist movements that aim to kill Shias across the region. Thank you all, and solidarity with the people of Iran and Iraq.

The speakers and protesters all knew the implications of a war with Iran: the well-tuned United States military-industrial complex would thrive while civilians around the globe would suffer the consequences. Our fears were not unfounded- in the aftermath of the

assassination, hundreds have been killed in Iran at Soleimani's funeral and on Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752. The international community has been in turmoil trying to de-escalate the situation. While the working class hopes for peace, major corporations such as

Raytheon and Northrop Grumman are enjoying watching their profits increase as a direct result of needless violence. The message at the protest was clear:

No war with Iran. 🌸

Harassment and Grievance Officers and their Important Role in creating a Socialist Future

By Sarah Glomski, HGO

Madison Area DSA (MAD-SA) is currently accepting nominations for a Harassment and Grievance Officer. Per our constitution and bylaws and in accordance with National DSA policy, our chapter has two Harassment and Grievance Officers (HGO), who are responsible for ensuring that the chapter is a safe space for our members and community. This is an extremely important role in building a socialist future.

As socialists, we are working to create a **better world**. If we do not deliberately counteract problematic dynamics between ourselves, the same dynamics will occur in our chapter. Nearly everyone has a story about themselves or others being harassed in a workplace situation, and finding that there was no one to turn to, or feeling that nothing would be done if misconduct was reported. This is especially true for women, LGBTQ folks, people of color, and others from oppressed and marginalized identity groups. Those same dynamics can appear in socialist and anticapitalist spaces, and if left unchecked can undermine the trust we need to have to organize with each other. Ultimately they can cause organizations to implode. These dynamics also contribute to underrepresentation of the aforementioned groups in socialist and other left spaces, which undermines our ability to do good political work.

The role of the HGO is to offer a solution to this problem.

An HGO is a position in the chapter who DSA members can go to with an official complaint if someone has taken actions that make them feel unsafe or unwelcome in MADSA. All who participate in MADSA functions are expected to abide by our code of conduct (Available at <https://madison.dsausa.org/resources/code-of-conduct/>). If an individual in a DSA space has violated the code of conduct, the offended party may reach out to the HGOs through our confidential email address dsamsnhgo@gmail.com. Those without email are also welcome to speak to an HGO in person.

As HGOs, our principles and processes are grounded in restorative justice, which seeks to center the rights of the offended, as well as to repair harm and prevent future harm. An important aspect of the work is educating the offending party as to why their behavior was harmful, including the principles of intent versus impact, and the way power dynamics and privileged and marginalized identities impact our interactions with each other.

Madison DSA's HGO team also sees our role as much more holistic than just responding to issues that are reported. We also seek to educate members and cultivate a space that is welcoming and vibrant. Some of the ways our team

HOW DO I BECOME AN HGO?

It is important that HGOs be democratically elected and accountable to the membership. Interested parties should indicate their interest in candidacy by emailing a brief statement about themselves and why they would make a good HGO to dsamadison@gmail.com.

Some of the qualities that make a successful HGO are:

- Good communication skills
- Understanding of the principles of restorative justice and a commitment to upholding them
- Ability to have difficult conversations with care for all involved, including being trauma-informed
- The ability to keep information confidential and uphold the code of conduct.

Further questions about the HGO team? Feel free to contact HGO Sarah Glomski at sarahelizabethch@gmail.com.

has worked to do this are by regularly giving brief announcements and presentations at general meetings reminding folks of how they can contact an HGO, what types of issues an HGO might be helpful on. HGOS have also provided brief education at chapter meetings, on topics such as bystander intervention and how to apply "step up/step back" being mindful of other comrades' social

cues and give all folks an equal chance to contribute in meetings.

One of the HGO team's goals for 2020 is to plan and execute a 3 hour long training on verbal de-escalation and harassment prevention. I have provided similar trainings my work as a mental health and substance abuse counselor, and have seen firsthand how equipping someone with tools around assertive communication and conflict de-escalation can be incredibly transformative. In an ideal solicaist world, all children would receive this type of training in the public schools, which would prevent a lot of problems that occur. As we work to build a socialist world, we will provide these tools and support to each other. 🌸

Foxconn: We Want Our Money Back

By Mary E. Croy

Trump trumpeted the technology manufacturing deal with Taiwanese company Foxconn as the “eighth wonder of the world” when company executives visited the White House, according to then Chief of Staff and Wisconsin GOP insider Reince Priebus. In 2017, Foxconn reached an agreement with the Walker administration, promising to invest \$10 billion in the Mount Pleasant campus and hire up to 13,000 people.



2017: The Walker administration offered up to \$3 billion in handouts to entice Foxconn to build a factory in Wisconsin. It had also recently reneged on a deal in Pennsylvania where it originally promised to spend \$30 million and create jobs for up to 500 people. But Wisconsin would be different: Foxconn claimed it would employ 3,000 people, and increase the workforce to 13,000 people as soon as 2022. Additionally, it promised to give \$100 million to UW-Madison to create “innovation centers” and a research institute. The Walker administration pursued these initiatives despite Foxconn's dark history of worker abuse in China: the company became notorious for employee suicides and for responding to the deaths by installing “suicide nets” outside of dorms at its facilities in China.

2018: Foxconn moved to evict families from land in neighboring Sturtevant. A dozen homes were destroyed in Mount Pleasant. The Department of Natural Resources approved a water diver-

sion permit allowing up to 7 million gallons of water to be diverted from Lake Michigan. Restrictions were lifted and Foxconn was greenlighted to fill in 26 acres of wetlands in Racine County. At the same time the subsidy estimates ballooned to \$4.5 billion. Foxconn scaled back plans—instead of a cutting-edge big screen TV plant, it was announced that the factory would build smaller panels, and the investment by the Taiwanese company shrank to \$2.5 billion.

2019: Foxconn began hesitating on building any plant in Wisconsin. Meanwhile, taxpayers have spent at least \$137 million on infrastructure, roads, and buying land for the project. The company hired 156 people during the year. The Wisconsin plant started work as an assembly facility that finishes production of TV displays made in Mexico. Starting pay is approximately \$14 per hour with little or no benefits. When the deal was struck, Foxconn promised average pay would be \$23 per hour. Mount Pleasant's bond rating is down-

-graded because of an anticipated increase in debts. The company also applied for and received a fire code variance to omit sprinklers in some areas of the building.

2020: The company has 520 employees in Wisconsin. Foxconn promises to hire 1,500 people by May 2020. It releases figures that it has awarded around \$370 million in construction, about 17% of the \$2.1 billion laid out in the original application. Donations to UW-Madison are at \$700,000 and the research institute has not yet been built.

So far, Foxconn has refused to renegotiate the agreement. It claims to have fulfilled the goals for 2019 and if the subsidies are approved by the state, it could receive more than \$50 million this year. So far the state has not certified the tax credits. As the state and the Taiwanese corporation wrangle, plans for what the factory will make and even if it will begin this May remain uncertain.

This whole mess shows the fatal flaws in the neoliberal obsession with “public-private partnerships” as ways of building healthy local economies. Instead of relying on the whims of a billionaire sitting behind a desk in Taipei, why not have direct public investment to build needed infrastructure and create services dictated by the will and interest of citizens? Our tax dollars would be more efficiently spent, critical improvements could be made, and our State and ordinary people would be the beneficiaries. 

(Thanks to Madison Public Library Reference Services for research assistance)

Socialists Must Fight the War Machine at Home

By: Allen Ruff

The Madison area’s current campaign to stop the stationing of twenty F-35 attack jets at Truax Field/Dane County Airport demands the active support of all socialists. The multitude of local and global issues related to the proposed base should readily engage all comrades as we fight for social, economic and environmental justice.

Sound Strikes

At the local level, residents and activists on Madison’s north and east sides have raised numerous concerns. A serious issue involves the real threat of exponentially increased noise levels since, according to an Air National Guard (ANG)-mandated draft environmental impact study (EIS). The report details that the increased decibel level of the F-35s at take-off will be some four times greater than that of the F-16s currently based at Truax.

According to the EIS, “...The increase in noise exposure near the airport would “disproportionately impact low-income areas” with minority populations, creating an “uninhabitable” inner ring of low- and middle-income housing surrounding the airport. The East Side already faces significant neglect and injustice due to Madison and Dane County policies, and the proposed air base would only increase the disparity between this community and the rapidly-gentrifying downtown and West Side neighborhoods. In effect, the proposed air base would compound stress

on impoverished communities and focus negative impacts on Madison’s communities of color.

A separate City of Madison analysis also noted that the area close to, but just beyond the area deemed eligible for federal “mitigation” (soundproofing) funding will experience virtually identical noise levels with no federal support to address this issue. This will leave residents who already bear the brunt of racial, economic, and environmental injustice without the necessary resources to protect themselves from dangerous noise levels in their homes. Additionally, soundproofing may not even be an option for the north side mobile home park close by the airport and within directly impacted area, since the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) considers mobile homes non-permanent structures ineligible for “mitigation” funds.

Even the areas that are eligible for “mitigation” funds would suffer, as soundproofing projects could take years to complete. Local homeowners in these areas, largely comprised of working class residents, are already anticipating losses in the values of their homes--for most a key asset.

The EIS also noted that the heavily impacted area currently has large numbers of children, childcare centers and public schools and that impacts to children associated with the increased noise levels would be considered “disproportionate and significant.”

Overall, numerous low income and working poor residents will be dispossessed at a time when

Madison is experiencing pronounced, well-documented, and long-term crises in affordable housing and racial inequity.

Chemical Warfare

Environmental alarms have also been raised as highly toxic PFAS contaminants, estimated at 15 times over the “acceptable” level by monitors from the Department of Natural Resources, have been found in Starkweather Creek leading to Lake Monona. Investigators have found that the dangerously harmful pollutant can be traced back to Truax, where PFAS-loaded foam has been used in Air National Guard (ANG) firefighting drills. While the DNR has posted warnings about human contact with the Creek’ water, the City of Madison has formally requested that the ANG remediate the situation, to little avail. Meanwhile, experts anticipate that the levels of ground and water contaminants will only increase as expansion at the airport’s facilities for the F-35s (at a projected cost of \$90-\$120 million) is expected to begin before existing problems are cleaned-up.

The EIS also stated that with the arrival of the F-35s, projected annual airfield CO₂e emissions would increase by approximately 12,478 tons or 135 percent... equivalent to adding an additional 2,438 passenger vehicles onto area roads with each driving an average 11,500 miles per year.

Proponents

Despite projected negative effects on Madison’s multi-racial, working class North and East sides, various interests elsewhere have come together to applaud and promote the proposed F-35 base. A key booster, the local Chamber of Commerce leadership has been busy promoting a false promise of area-wide economic growth and “more jobs” as a result of the base. However, while more temporary employment will result from constructing new facilities



at Truax, the EIS study concluded that the resulting increases in employment and income to the Madison region would be “beneficial but negligible.” Other enthusiasts – among them numbers of observably well organized military personnel, veterans, and others – repeatedly claim the F-35s will provide for our “defense” and “security” and that increased noise levels should be celebrated as “the sound of freedom.”

Most significantly, in a rare showing of bi-partisanship, multitudes of elected officials at the local, county and state levels along with local notables such as Paul Soglin and Rebecca Blank have applauded the planes’ anticipated arrival. Many of those who haven’t officially thrown their support behind the F-35s, including <NAME> and <NAME>, have sat on the fence, reluctant to come out firmly against the base.

The most notable proponent of the project has been Madison’s “progressive” Democrat, US Senator Tammy Baldwin. Her unabashed support of the F-35s, while draped in the rhetoric of “security,” “jobs” and “support for the military,” has been explained by some in vulgar economic terms: major weapons manufacturers contribute to her “war chest” and she must continue securing Pentagon contracts for in-state firms or risk losing sup-

port from in-state manufacturers and their workers. There’s more to the story, of course.

A Global War Machine

Presently the costliest weapons project in history and a gigantic boondoggle of cost overrides, production of the F-35s provides a great illustration of how the military-industrial-congressional complex, or more accurately the Permanent War Economy, functions.

The Pentagon purchases the F-35s from the gigantic military manufacturer Lockheed-Martin (LM) at a current estimated price of between \$85 and \$120 million per plane. With LM serving as the prime contractor, the plane is actually a multinational project as components and parts for it are provided through a series of global supply chains which provide parts or assemblies from a total of some 1600 US subcontractors residing in 46 states and 350 congressional districts as well as companies in a number of US allies - among them the United Kingdom, Italy, Netherlands, Australia, Norway, and Denmark. Lockheed, which experienced a 58.3% increase in the price of its shares in 2019, has been selling the jets to those partners as well as to other client states including Israel, Japan, South Korea and Belgium.

In part because there are so many “hands” and technologies involved in the planes’ production, and partly because of resulting design flaws and changes, there have been innumerable glitches and delays which have driven up the amount of budget overrides (currently at \$200 billion) and resulting additional funding from the Pentagon. And of course, all this funding comes straight from the pockets of taxpayers in the form of discretionary spending diverted from domestic needs or deficit spending deferred debt.

Who Pays?

The F-35 program’s projected long-term production cost is expected to top \$1.5 trillion. However, the actual cost of the project becomes inestimable if one begins to contemplate the funds siphoned away from social needs and true security—funding for health care, education, mass transit, affordable housing for all, green technologies, etc.—the myriad productive development projects currently diverted away by the Permanent War Economy.

The bottom line? As fifty-four cents of each discretionary tax dollar goes to the Pentagon, working class folks in places like Madison are expected to bare additional costs and burdens as military-industrial giants such as Lockheed reap the benefits. Meanwhile, the only future “trickle down” resulting from the F-35’s arrival at Truax will likely be from the increase of pollutants into Starkweather Creek. 

Dear Commie

*Dear Commie,
How do you pronounce bourgeois? What’s up with this word?
Thanks, Bad with Words.*

Dear Bad with Words,
“Bourgeois” is pronounced like boo-jwah. Maybe you’ve heard someone call something expensive “bougie”? Same thing. It comes from the word “bourgeoisie” (boo-jwah-zee), which originally referred to merchants and other businesspeople who lived in cities in the Middle Ages (“burghers”). In Marxism, bourgeoisie and “capitalist class” are often interchanged, because Marx explained how feudalism turned into capitalism as the bourgeoisie became the dominant class in society. Usually we just say capitalist class these days.

Yours, Commie.

*Dear Commie,
What makes socialists different from super progressives?
Yours, Figuring it Out*

Dear Figuring it Out,
The big difference between a socialist and a progressive is that while socialists and progressives may want some of the same things in the short term (raise the minimum wage, better environmental controls, taxing wealth), socialists see the problems of society coming from capitalism. From a socialist perspective, we’ll continue to have these problems as long as we’re in capitalism.

Socialists point to how capitalism is about creating profit, not about taking care of people or social problems. The goal of capitalism is not to create prosperity for everyone in society. It is always to create more wealth for capitalists – there’s never an end. A capitalist as an individual doesn’t have to be a greedy, shitty person, because as long as you’re a player in the game, you must grow or die. That is the rationale of the system, and capitalist society is built to protect it.

Progressives usually don’t have a problem with capitalism itself, they think that we can have a reformed capitalism that works for everyone. Socialists disagree; we want to overcome capitalism. We want the world to be run democratically, and that also means the economy and energy systems must be run democratically by the people who make them work.

There’s more of course, but that’s it in a nutshell.

Class strugglingly yours, Commie.

False State of Austerity

By Dayna Long

Over the last ten years, Republicans in the Wisconsin state legislature have severely undermined local control including barring state regional transit authorities and instituting levy-limits, leaving local governments with few options for raising funds. In response, county and city governments have adapted their budgets to fit these state-imposed constraints, meting out austerity measures on behalf of the Republican Party like a sharp stick in the eye to their constituents. Having accepted the sort-of true premise that our leaders have no choice, and with few prospects for resistance, we, their constituents, have adapted, too. We have accepted austerity and tough decisions, even in cities like Madison and Milwaukee, where the untapped wealth on display makes the new measures and the shrunken budgets all the more obscene.

In this new decade, socialists in Wisconsin should lead the charge for another way.

The Dynamic at Play

In a recent example of the above dynamic, the Madison Common Council instituted a \$40 “wheel tax” to raise funds for improvements to the city’s Metro Transit system, increasing the cost of vehicle registration for Madison residents to a steep \$153. Unsurprisingly, many people were unhappy about the change. While anyone who said that the city doesn’t need to spend more money on Metro Transit is sorely mistaken, people aren’t wrong to be critical of what is essentially a regressive tax -- every resident

is charged \$40, regardless of income. The wheel tax, like any flat tax, will be disproportionately hard on low-income residents, often living in far-flung neighborhoods where it’s hardest to go without a car due to insufficient transit service and a lack of nearby jobs and grocery stores.

A funding plan that requires everyone to contribute equally hides that we don’t all contribute equally to the need for public transit. For example, some employers require hundreds or even thousands of people to commute to and from their business five times a week to create wealth for them. Does it actually make sense for me to pay the same \$40 wheel tax for transit as the millionaires and billionaires who own those businesses?

Alders expressed a lot of reluctance to go through with the wheel-tax. But at the end of the day Metro Transit badly needed the funding and the state had them in a bind. They didn’t want to reach into our pockets, but the Republicans have blocked their access to other coffers. On top of that, you don’t have to look far to see how things might have played out had the Common Council rejected the wheel tax. Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele didn’t get his wheel tax past the Milwaukee County Board in 2018. Since then, the county has made cuts to bus routes. Bus drivers in local ATU 998 went without a contract for over a year as the county claimed that the union’s demands exceeded the county’s budget. They only came to an agreement this past November, hours before a transit strike was set to commence.

There really are no good choices when you play the Republicans’ game. And to be fair to everyone, it can be hard to envision an alternative to playing. The labor movement is only beginning to recover from the impact of Act 10, and successful, sustained organizing has been sporadic at best since the Wisconsin Uprising. It can seem like there’s no way forward except to contort our values and goals to accommodate the Republican-imposed limitations. In fact, I will admit that I spent a whole week supporting the wheel tax, even writing a letter to the City Finance Committee urging them to adopt it. Transit in Madison is bad and needs to be better and yet there is no radical, grassroots movement in Madison calling for robust, fare-free transit. Transit advocates in Madison supported the wheel tax. Most of those who opposed the wheel tax don’t care about funding transit. I was (briefly) unable to see another way.

At the same time, it’s too easy to say that city and county leaders’ hands are tied and that they’d find a different way if only they could. Democrats are often not sorry to have a Republican-provided excuse to avoid making their friends and collaborators in the business class ante up. Neoliberalism is entirely compatible with local governments that are hamstrung in their ability to levy taxes, that are forced to shrink services and cede responsibility to individuals and control to private interests. Reducing the role of government and shifting more and more of the burden of caring for people onto individuals and families has been a bipartisan project for decades.

And while greater funding

for things like transit and housing are always a question mark, there seems to be no end to the amount of money cities will pour into policing. In the same budget that introduced the wheel tax, the city allocated funds to hire three more police officers in spite of a falling crime rate and the fact that Madison Police Department already has a higher than average officer to resident ratio for a city of Madison's size. Even within the narrow confines set by the Republican party, city leaders get to make choices. In Madison, they choose to defund essential services to give more money to what is already the most expensive city agency.

A Losing Strategy

It's hard to say for certain how else the Common Council might have funded transit improvements in the confines of the existing city budget. That's exactly the problem. Even Alders with the best politics and great intentions (there are several who come to mind) can't win under the current conditions. Not only is the wheel tax itself a losing prospect, so are all strategies to fund services that accept this false state of austerity as an inevitable reality.

For one thing, the funding required to tackle the serious crises facing our state -- from its long-standing segregation and appalling racial disparities to the infrastructure improvements needed to tackle carbon emissions and survive extreme weather events -- won't be found in working people's shrinking bank accounts. Worse still, regressive funding measures obscure class divisions, taking from individuals equally as if we all profit equally from public investment. Our job as socialists is to expose the class interests that govern our communities, not to confuse them with bad policies.

Furthermore, when we treat Republican-imposed austerity as inevitable, we lower people's

expectations for the future at the very moment we should be raising prospects for the fights ahead. This might be a fine thing for Democrats who are not opposed to shrinking working people's expectations about what the government should provide, and who have a long history of neutralizing movements. But for socialists, it is a terrible dead end.

Another Way

Seattle socialist and city council member Kshama Sawant provides an excellent example of how socialists can relate to state-imposed funding restrictions. Washington is said to have the most regressive tax structure of any state in the country, creating inequality best characterized by a homelessness crisis in the same city where Amazon is headquartered. Instead of accommodating to these conditions, Sawant takes every opportunity to connect people's hardship to the undertaxed opulence of the tech giants and other corporations. The connection is also reflected in the policies she's fought for, including a \$15/hr minimum wage and a per-employee head tax on big businesses to help ease the housing crisis. While state restrictions do limit what's possible at the city level, whole movements have coalesced around the popular demands Sawant gives voice to, including unions. Her incredible electoral victory over an Amazon-financed candidate this past November speaks to the strength of the coalition amassed around her politics. It's exciting to imagine what such a coalition might achieve next.

We can also learn from the successful teachers' strikes of the past two years. As many of them demonstrated, it is possible to force change past red state legislatures. But teachers didn't win by following the rules or by limiting their demands to what was possible according to their state governments. In fact, bucking the austerity that was hurting them

and their students required defying conventional wisdom about what was possible, even when it came from their own timid union leadership.

As socialists in Wisconsin, we have to be the first to insist that while there are still billionaires alive on earth (including right here in Dane County) it is wrong to ask working class people to pay a greater share, nor can we tolerate cuts to the services all of us rely on, be it bus routes or subsidized housing. Our job in this new decade is to share a vision of the future so inspiring that people are willing to fight to achieve it, which means thinking far beyond Republican-imposed levy limits and raising the prospects for the movements to defeat them. 

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