



# REDMADISON

Newsletter of the Madison Area DSA

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**2**  
**ECOSOCIALISM**

In the "greenest city in the nation," the ability to live sustainably is a class issue.

**5**  
**THE 2011 UPRISING**

Paul Buhle looks back at 2011's protests in Wisconsin

**6**  
**MEDICAID**

Wisconsin's brutal cuts to Medicaid show how much we need Medicare For All

**11**  
**THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX IN MADISON**

A deep dive into the war racket and local politics.

# An Ecosocialist Madison is an Equitable Madison

By Clare Michaud



Imagining an ecosocially just world requires us to look at making radical changes to myriad aspects of our everyday (American) lives. Working toward an ecosocialist society would implicate everything from resource extraction and waste disposal to access to healthy food and clean water to the country's approach to warfare, the consumption of goods, and treatment of indigenous people and lands.

Madisonians love to tout their commitment to sustainable lifestyle choices, and this ability to do so is bolstered by the City of Madison being recognized as the greenest city in the nation and appearing on several lists ranking it as a highly walkable city. Yet, these distinctions are pretty specific to Madison's isthmus. Heading down South Park Street, or to Madison's

north side shows a very different way of life that does not as easily allow for bike commuting or accessing fresh food. The ability to make environmentally sustainable lifestyle choices is a class issue in Madison, and is something that is attainable for the residents who tend to be white, educated, and with a certain amount of wealth.

The ability to live without a car on the isthmus, and instead rely on public transit, biking, and walking to get around, highlights the city's concentration of resources to the downtown and near west- and east-side neighborhoods, where the cost of living is higher. Isthmus residents have bountiful access to various grocery store options: both supermarkets and smaller, more specialized food shops and co-ops are viable, in addition to a gamut of farmers' market options that run on

weekends and weekdays, throughout the spring and summer as well as with select winter options.

Purchasing food at smaller shops, the Willy Street Co-op, and directly from the producer at farmers' markets is an excellent way of supporting local food producers and farmers; it helps to sustain those farmers' and producers' livelihoods during a time when farming as a profession is becoming less stable. Ten percent of Wisconsin dairy farms had to shut down in 2019 alone, due to China placing tariffs on U.S. agricultural exports as part of a 2018 trade war with the U.S. Ecosocial justice must address both the access to healthy living while also strengthening local economies; global capitalist gain has roots in imperialist exploration and exploitation, and this mindset lives on in actions

such as trade wars for the sake of preserving global strength, which impact the livelihoods that are part of our local agricultural economy. Being limited to purchasing food from large-scale producers, too, has environmental impacts related to the shipping and transmission of goods; having better access to more local producers helps to support those producers while also leaving a smaller carbon footprint.

With the city's plan to expand Madison's Beltline, Madison-area residents' ability to access more resources will ease, but at what environmental cost? People who live in parts of the city where it's necessary to drive to the nearest grocery store, for example, may benefit from the additional lanes, especially during evening commute times. However, building on the expressway encourages more individual drivers to be on the road. Instead of making changes to Madison's transit options that promote having a car as a primary means of going between home, work, schools, and shopping centers, the city could take an approach that considers environmental impact, and create infrastructure that prioritizes buses, biking, and walking. During discussions about Beltline expansion, Alderman Grant Foster, from the 15th District, argued against the expansion and in favor of alternative transit options; he also brought up the point that if the Beltline is expanded, more traffic will be brought to city streets, an infrastructure that isn't intended for that volume of traffic. Rather than expanding the Beltline, bus lines could be extended and added to better serve areas further from the isthmus.

Increased traffic on the Beltline means increased fuel emissions, creating a more prominent carbon footprint in Madison; it also means increased noise pollution. The upward trend toward living in urban areas is exacerbated by the way that modern cities are trending toward sprawl. Noise pollution contributes first and foremost to

hearing health, but also is a strong factor in heart disease, learning problems in children, and in being a disturbance to sleeping, according to the World Health Organization.

And Madison could become even noisier. Like expanding the Beltline, housing F-35 fighter jets at Truax Field would bring heavy noise pollution to the field's surrounding neighborhoods, which are primarily occupied by minority and lower-income residents, including children. In the January issue of Red Madison, Allen Ruff wrote about the presence of F-35s driving the already-existing disparities between the community near Truax and the wealthy downtown and West-side communities. We must resist the use of the Truax Field for F-35s in order to put forth the effort to bridge the quality-of-life gap between Madison's lower-income neighborhoods and its wealthier bubbles.

The presence of F-35s poses serious and dangerous concerns for neighborhoods near Truax Field, and is also part of the larger problem of the U.S. military's contribution to environmental destruction. The U.S. Department of Defense is the biggest contributor to pollution nationally and globally. Following in the history of imperialistic expansion and resource exploitation, the U.S. Military impacts environments all over the world, including in our backyard: bringing in F-53s alone would cause annual airfield CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions to increase by 135%.

Fostering an environmentally-centric society requires that we are able to advocate for fair and just use of the land. In November 2019, Governor Evers signed a bill (Assembly Bill 426) into law intended to criminalize and chill environmental protests and protect energy providers. The Center for Media and Democracy reported that "un-

der the new law, peaceful protesters can now be charged with a felony punishable by up to six years in prison and a \$10,000 fine if they trespass on property owned, leased, or operated by companies engaged in the distribution of oil or petroleum." Wisconsin has followed nine other states in passing a bill that aims to prevent protests like the one that happened over the Dakota Access Pipeline. Assembly Bill 426 shows the Evers Administration's prioritization for oil and gas companies over the environmental impact of natural resource

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*Fostering an environmentally-centric society requires that we are able to advocate for fair and just use of land.*

extraction by these corporations, and is a strong step away from addressing this impact. The bill raised opposition from Tribal Nations, but these are cited as being largely disregarded during public hearings; an ecosocial society would prioritize Tribal Nations' voices as a way to show respect for, solidarity with, and truly restore sovereignty to the Tribal Nations whose lands were seized and capitalized on by white settlers.

Envisioning an ecosocialist future for Madison incorporates everything from transit to the consumption of goods to larger-scale initiatives being pushed forward by the U.S. Military and partnerships forged with oil and gas companies. An ecosocialist future should prioritize the health and livelihood of all people, rather than having opportunities to live without certain environmental stressors limited to the liberal bubble that is the isthmus. 

# Homelessness: Austerity leads to Blindness

By Mary E. Croy



**E**ight bills and not even a band aid in sight. As homelessness continues to soar in Wisconsin, the Republican led legislature refuses to take action. There have been eight bills proposed, and only one is even being considered in the current session. In the state budget, \$3.7 million was allocated to fight this problem, but nothing has made it to the governor's desk.

Last June, the Assembly passed legislation, but it lingered in the Senate. Had it passed, more beds could've been provided before winter. However, excuses and dedication to austerity won the day. It is estimated that 20,000 children and adults are without a permanent residence in our state. In Madison an average of 225 people per day, including children, seek relief at the Beacon Shelter near downtown.

In Milwaukee, a tent city has begun under the Hoan Bridge. Ironic, since the bridge is named after a great Socialist mayor.

Homelessness exposes the racist nature of American society. For example, right here in Dane County, 5.1% of the population is African-American while 53% of the people who receive services for homelessness are African-American.

Our state spending on the homeless population is approximately \$3.3 million annually and it has been at this sum for decades. Neighboring Minnesota meanwhile spends \$44.3 million.

It is indeed a disgrace to our state and country to see people sleeping in the streets next to expensive restaurants, underneath the glaring lights of the capitol dome.

While Republicans and other

neoliberals scream about cost, the statistics speak for themselves. It costs the public \$35,600 every year to care for a homeless person, while that sum can be cut in half with decent, affordable housing.

There's a better way. In Vienna, Austria, public housing is considered the foundation for creating a livable and humane city. Socialists after World War I established a "social housing" policy that built not only apartments, but living spaces featuring kindergartens, health centers, playgrounds and workshops. They hired some of the leading architects to design beautiful buildings. Eligibility for public housing includes 80% of the population and this has led to a city where you cannot tell status by neighborhood.

How's it funded? Sources are varied: the income tax, corporate tax and a payroll tax. In exchange,

most citizens pay about 20 - 25% of their income on rent—a rate most Madisonians would kill for. 62% of Vienna's citizens live in social housing. Because both middle class and lower income people can participate and you can keep your apartment even if your income goes up, a wide mix of people live in public housing without stigma. The city has panels that judge new developments, which means that energy efficiency, beauty and convenience for the residents can be emphasized. About one third of new apartment complexes in Vienna are publicly funded. The city owns about 25% of all housing, and indirectly controls another 200,000 units which are owned by limited profit companies that are strictly regulated with the city keeping final control over development. About 5,000 new, subsidized units are made available every year, and these are open to lower and middle income people.

It's true that the problem of homelessness must be solved with a variety of tools, such as good mental health care, social support, innovative education and jobs, but affordable housing is essential in order to make our national disgrace a thing of the past. Red Vienna—the socialist movement that created one of the world's most livable cities-- can be a lesson for us as we build Red Madison. 🌸

*Thanks to Madison Central Library Reference Desk for research assistance.*

# Remembering the Uprising

By Paul Buhle



**T**he Wisconsin Uprising of 2011-12 was so unexpected, so inspired and inspiring, and the thumping defeat that followed so disheartening, that the whole series of events now threatened to become a phantom memory, almost unreal.

The idea that crowds of 10,000, 25,000 or 125,000 and a few times upward of 200,000, could be protesting Act 10 (crafted to eliminate public unions through what amounted to the “right to work,” without being represented by them), that the Capitol building could be peacefully occupied during the first weeks of the demonstration, that people came from near and as far as New York or Los Angeles to join us—this was a moment for democratic socialism as well. It is easy to remember the firefighters entering the

together by Mari Jo Buhle and myself, *It Started In Wisconsin: Dispatches from the Front Line of the New Labor Protests (2011)*.

“ DSA members will want to read deeper than this brief recollection can offer. What needs to be said, briefly, is that the bipartisan approval of public unions can be traced all the way back to the 1930s and the (Wisconsin) origin of the very non-radical AFSCME. The legislative approval of

public employee unions, in 1959, was one of those developments making the 1960s-70s of Madison's economics, politics and cultural life fairly unique, if fairly similar to some other college towns with an emerging left-of-center majority.

The newer Republican leadership, emerging in the 1990s and

into effect. And the demonstrations began.

We knew even then that the Republican intent was to destroy private-sector unions as well, despite Walker's promise not to do so. Many union families, ill-educated by their unions as well as the media, seemed not to want to believe this. The "Right to Work" legislation for them followed, as expected.

What is most memorable? Here, different participants will have different recollections. I remember the signs with Robert La Follette's photo, a recollection of the great anti-war progressive and candidate for the presidency in 1924. I also remember the legions of senior citizens and retired unionists, from across Wisconsin and beyond: their unions were gone - along with the factories - but they wanted to go out with their boots on. And they did, old people in the bitter cold. They were joined on many days by crowds of teenagers, some of them from Madison schools, others coming from their neighborhoods and even other cities with their parents, grandparents and friends. Most of all, I remember the gendered nature of the workforce in the lead: women teachers and health workers. And the leadership role of my old union, the Teaching Assistants Association.

We were to learn later that the union leaders of bigger unions, in suites of the Concourse Hotel, watched furiously, intent on gaining some bargain scraps from Walker but even more intent on getting us off the streets, to prepare for some future Democratic electoral sweep, the one that never came. 

*Paul Buhle published the SDS magazine Radical America in Madison in the late 1960s and reported for several publications on the Uprising.*

# Wisconsin's Brutal Cuts to Medicaid Proves Necessity of Medicare For All

By Karl Locher

**D**uring the infamous lame duck legislative session in the closing days of 2018, the Wisconsin legislature passed a breathtakingly reactionary agenda. The rapid move to limit the power of the incoming Evers administration was the object of significant attention in state and national news media. Indeed, as much as the Wisconsin Republican Party made great efforts to withhold information from the public during the legislative session, it was a nonetheless brazen - and largely successful - attempt to restructure Wisconsin's government. The consolidation of power into the hands of a few members of the Wisconsin Republican Party was unquestionably an affront to democratic process.

Amidst the outrage over the shamelessly undemocratic grab for power, the legislature and waning days of the Walker administration quietly made drastic cuts to Wisconsin's Medical Assistance program, called BadgerCare Plus. Medical Assistance, known better as Medicaid, is the federal program to provide healthcare to the poorest Americans. The income eligibility requirements vary from state to state, and in Wisconsin vary depending on your family status. For example, as of 2020, in order for a childless adult to qualify for BadgerCare Plus, they must have an income of \$1,063.33 or less per month.

To understand why BadgerCare Plus is so vulnerable to swift and

uncontested austerity measures, one needs to understand how it came to be a program in the first place. Medicaid was created in 1965 alongside the federal Medicare program. Unlike Medicare, Medicaid is largely administered by state governments in a shared cost model. This means that the federal government requires states to create their own Medicaid programs, including eligibility requirements and medical reimbursement rates, and in return, the federal government will cover a percentage of the cost of that program. Wisconsin followed the trend set by other states by privatizing the delivery of Medicaid coverage for most enrollees when it formed BadgerCare in 1999. In this model, the state pays Health Management Organizations (HMOs) and Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) to provide healthcare for BadgerCare enrollees.

The privatization of BadgerCare - and then eventually BadgerCare Plus - purported to save money for the state while delivering the benefits of commercial insurance to enrollees. Like many other neoliberal initiatives, HMOs and MCOs were sold as a shot of market innovation and consumer choice into a supposedly anachronistic government program. In reality, these two qualities of Medicaid - that it is a cost-share program and relies on privatized service delivery - created exploitable opportunities for profit-seeking at the expense of the quality and access to healthcare. Cost sharing puts states in the position of seeking to reduce their

own budget burden while maximizing federal revenue for Medicaid services. Privatized service delivery creates an opportunity for a corporation to accept government reimbursement for services, and then to deliver as infrequently and as profitably as legally possible.

From the beginning, Medicaid was vulnerable to privatization efforts. Over the last forty years, programs that are devolved to state administration, like Medicaid, and are “means-tested” – meaning they require meeting certain income requirements in order to enroll as opposed to universal enrollment in services – have been the targets of corporate profiteering. Because these programs are shifted onto states, which have considerably lower capacity for revenue generation than the federal government, they are more prone to be thrown into crises of “sustainability” during downturns in consumption-driven sales tax revenue. Further, as “means-tested” programs, social welfare programs like Medicaid are construed as “handouts” to unproductive members of society and are politically vulnerable to schisms in class consciousness. Unlike Medicare, which is a widely perceived as a universal right for all, Medicaid is increasingly construed as both a drag on state budgets and an entrapment scheme for the working class whose livelihood should rely less on government programs and more on their employers’ begrudgingly paid benefits.

The result of the slow transformation of Medicaid into a market for private profit has been devastating to the livelihoods of poor and working-class people in Wisconsin. The recent changes to BadgerCare passed under the lame duck session will affect “childless adults” with incomes under 100% of the federal poverty level. What was formerly no-premium health insurance will now require monthly premiums in addition to copays for Emergency Room visits. Particularly devastating are that these fees must be paid by the 10th day of



the month following a billing period. The bill cannot be paid in cash or in-person, it must be paid with a credit card or money order. If someone doesn't pay, they will lose their coverage and be made ineligible to re-enroll for a 6-month period. For reference, about 150,000 people across the state will be affected by this change.

These measures are a deliberate attempt to strip the poorest Wisconsinites of health coverage and it will likely be very successful in doing so. There is voluminous data that poor people are underserved and intentionally exploited by banks and often cannot access the kind of payment services required to meet these copays. The obfuscation and complication of this payment scheme will result in thousands of people losing life-saving, crucial healthcare.

The lame duck session signals a new phase in the politics of austerity. State governments are moving beyond the point where services are merely handed over to private industry and are now taking unprecedented steps to cut social services altogether. The first step, of privatization, was crucial in taking a public good and turning it into

fought over in public politics – but instead as private goods that are hidden from public consciousness and can be removed without political backlash.

The fate of BadgerCare – and Medicaid generally – is proof of the need for Medicare For All and a system of socialized medical services. The centrist suggestions of “medicare for all who want it” should be quickly dismissed as political dead-ends that would doom countless individuals to death by inadequate healthcare. The structural similarities between Medicaid and “medicare for all who want it” are uncanny. It is clear that an “optional” federal Medicare program would lead to private health providers

and insurers simply opting-out of providing care. “Medicare for all who want it” would quickly devolve into a stigmatized program of insufficient healthcare comprised of a begrudging network of providers doing the legally mandated bare minimum. It isn't difficult to imagine that this too, like Medicaid, would eventually be seen as a pariah in need of a private savior, before it's supposed savior puts it to a quiet death.

“*State governments are moving beyond the point where services are merely handed over to private industry and are now taking unprecedented steps to cut social services altogether.*”

## MEDICAID

Socialized medicine, best represented through the Medicare For All movement, provides more than a technical solution that private health care has failed to deliver. Medicare For All could, for the first time, create a consciousness of health care as a public good and a universal right. This creates broader class consciousness, even if it is sometimes more like class unconsciousness. As people begin to view threats and injuries to such programs as an inju-

ry to their own well-being, they can see it also as an injury to their community and develop empathy for other people who also rely on the program. It is not coincidental that cuts and privatization efforts have been much less successful with universal programs like Social Security and Medicare than they have been for means-tested programs like Medicaid and TANF. As political centrists and leftists debate a – perhaps unfortunately – shared political path for the next

four years, it is crucial that we build strength through the Medicare For All movement and that socialized medicine is a galvanizing principle of our politics. 

# February Political Cartoon



(Cartoon by Corey Alexander)

*Forbe's pegs Epic CEO Judy Faulkner's net worth at \$4.3 billion. It's hard to calculate the average salary of an Epic worker because there's wide variation in pay across jobs. For example, among the employee-reported salaries*

*on Glassdoor.com the average yearly salary for Quality Assurance workers is \$54,690 while the average salary for Software Developers is \$110,052. But let's guess at an average of \$84,000 a year. At that rate, it would take an*

*employee 51,190 years to earn as much money as Epic's top boss has already pocketed.*

*Happy Pi Day. DSA <3s math and we hate billionaires.*

# The War in Afghanistan

By Ben Heili



I remember my 14th birthday well. That day, my grandparents' newspaper told me the USA had started to bomb Afghanistan—Operation Enduring Freedom, they called it. Something in my 14-year-old brain approved of that name at the time, and it turned out to be partially accurate -- one thing that operation did is endure. One generation later, over 100,000 people have died in the conflict. 14,000 American troops and an undisclosed number of private contractors remain in Afghanistan. They project imperial power aimlessly 6,000 miles from home. Their mission is pointless, devastating, and forgotten all at the same time.

In the blur of December 2019, The Washington Post released a trove of documents known as the Afghanistan papers. I invite you to read their summary. These documents were released after a years-long FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) battle, and they revealed real

opinions of US military leaders and other stakeholders throughout the long war. The goals were lies, the outcomes were lies, even the measurable accomplishments were lies. A series of leaders inherited a mess, painted it however best it would suit their careers, and soon after rotated elsewhere. "Every data point was altered to present the best possible picture," said one colonel.

In the wake of 9/11 and the intense militarization of U.S. culture, how did the military define "best?" This is a hard question to answer in a war defined by mission creep. It surely didn't align with what was best for the invaded people of Afghanistan. For a while, finding Osama Bin Laden was a priority. Killing Taliban and Al-Qaeda leaders would bring prestige. Building a government in Kabul that could seem democratic and independent would earn medals. Building schools and bridges looked nice.

Winning fights against insurgents earned accolades for valor, never mind where the insurgents had come from in the decades-long occupation. The only line connecting these goals stems from a ghastly colonial mindset: we know better than these people what's best for these people.

As these documents reveal, the resources set aside to fit the hero narrative of the day were nearly limitless. Of course there was the military material shipped over at great expense, then often burned. But the nation-building efforts were misguided and wasteful as well. "One unidentified contractor told government interviewers he was expected to dole out \$3 million daily for projects in a single Afghan district roughly the size of a U.S. county." How much housing could we build in Dane or Milwaukee county for \$3 mill a day? How much renewable energy? How much public transit? Reinvested to help us thrive, that spending would certainly be attacked as wasteful. In service of empire, it goes unquestioned.

Naturally, the revelations of the Afghanistan papers slid straight out of the public consciousness along with every other bombshell that week. We knew the truth of this already, felt it, didn't we? War is old news, and this one is the oldest. Goalposts had already been moved, hidden, moved again, buried, all right out in the open. The war now runs solely on bureaucratic inertia and the need to build more swimming pools for North Virginia defense contractors. A few weeks later, Trump declared a new war with the assassination of Qassem Soleimani (remember that? I barely do). We can be thankful tensions subsided there for now, but the war drums are always beating.

So what does it mean to be anti-war in the third decade of the forever war? What can we do? The specific culture of militarism that took root in the Bush years has made a permanent home in the hearts of many Americans. Worshipping the troops and devaluing the lives of non-white non-Americans did not die with John McCain. We need clear and consistent messaging outside of the corporate media that illuminates the real consequences of war. When a pruny oligarch wants to start a conflict, we must be clear that he wants hundreds or thousands of children to die for oil or lithium. When generals tut-tut a withdrawal from the Middle East, we must be clear about the generational harm that can never heal if we keep killing there. When (not if) a hypothetical President Bernie Sanders is pressured into unjust uses of military power, we must pressure him just as hard as anyone else. Finally, the war machine needs material. That material is made and transported by workers. And if organized workers can't have an effect, what are we all doing here? 🌸

# Dear Commie

*Dear Commie,  
Why is everyone obsessed with 19th and early 20th century European politics and should I care even a little?  
Sincerely,  
Over the Eurocentrism*

Dear Understandably Over It,

Should you care? Yes.  
Before I explain why this history matters, I first want to share my very real sympathy for your exasperation. There's something about being told that the key to understanding the world lies in the writings of some old, dead, European men that sure does chafe! And Western socialists frequently and unfortunately overlook historic movements outside of Europe and Russia to our own detriment.

That said, the history you're referencing is the context in which Marx and Engels were first able to develop, test, and further develop their theories about materialism, capitalism, and the potential for socialism. And in the early 20th century, in Europe and Russia, socialists engaged in lively debates about how to put the theories of Marx and Engels into practice in their current conditions, tested their conclusions, and developed even more theory that is rife with lessons for 21st century socialists, like what material conditions give rise to fascism, why international solidarity is so important, and how we can most effectively organize ourselves.

While it would be a mistake to assume that we can simply apply the analyses of the Bolsheviks in 1917 (for example) to 2020 conditions in the United States, learning about the times that past gener-



ations of socialists lived through, their analysis of their conditions, and the debates that emerged from the challenges they faced is a way to sharpen our ability to assess our own conditions and figure out the best way forward. Think of it as practice through observation.

This doesn't have to be limited to just 19th and 20th century European histories, though. You can practice applying historical materialism on any social movement, whether it's the Zapatistas in Mexico, the Black Panthers in the USA, or the recent mass-demonstrations in Hong Kong and Kashmir. Whatever you choose to dig into, it's always a good idea to learn alongside fellow socialists. Read with comrades! Find relevant movies! Discuss current events! Mine the internet for resources (WeAreMany.org is a treasure trove of socialist talks about history and many other topics)! At the very, very least, your expanded knowledge means you won't have to take the word of a dude-bro descendent of old Europeans the next time these histories come up.

Good luck,  
Giant History Book Addict

# Military Industrial Complex in Madison

By Mark Hackler



**T**he Military-Industrial Complex (MIC) is alive and flourishing the U.S. This article looks first at MIC in the U.S., followed by the Military Side of MIC in Madison. Next, the Industrial (Business) Side of MIC in Madison is outlined. The article concludes with some thoughts on the Significance of MIC in Madison.

## MIC in the U.S.

We're all aware of the gargantuan size of the U.S. military industrial-complex. President Eisenhower warned that it was a threat to democracy as he left the White House.

"In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and

will persist."

We may have liked Ike for two terms, but it seems we didn't listen to him carefully as he was on his way out the door. The military-industrial components of President Trump's 2021 Budget of the United States are startling, inducing both anger and despair. The president's budget allocates \$740.5 billion for the Department of War, funding imperialist military operations (\$20.5 billion for current operations; \$32.5 billion for "enduring requirements"; \$16 billion for other programs), an updated and expanded nuclear program (\$28.9 billion, a 19 percent increase), and \$15.4 billion to begin the destabilizing process of militarizing space through the creation of a Space Force. Trump's military planners have even included \$20.3 billion for something akin to the Reagan-era "Star Wars" program, now called, more prosaically, "Missile Defeat and Defense." There are hyperson-

ic weapons, tanks, ships, bombers, and \$11.4 billion for the F-35, which may soon pollute the groundwater and the skies over Madison.

According to David Vine, author of *Base Nation*, the U.S. military has around 5,000 bases, 800 of which are in someone else's country. Statista.Com reports that slightly over 1.1 million Americans are on active duty with the Army (largest branch), Navy, Air Force, and Marines; another 1 million people are in the Guard and Reserve, and the Coast Guard has 48,837 active duty and reserve personnel.

Of course, these numbers, large as they are, under-report military expenditures, because many overseas contingency operations are funded separately. Much of the budget of the Department of Homeland Security (\$49.8 billion for operations, plus \$5.1 billion for disaster relief) is, by definition, for "defense of the homeland," a fine,

authoritarian sounding phrase that includes brutalizing people who migrant in concentration camps. Money for nuclear weapons development (\$19.8 billion, a 18.4 percent increase) is buried in the Department of Energy's budget. The National Intelligence Program, which includes the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the National Security Agency (NSA), and six other black box agencies (but not military intelligence) has a 2021 budget of \$61.9 billion. The Department of Veterans Affairs, the sometimes forgotten "backside" of our military adventurism, receives \$243.3 billion in President Trump's budget, a 10.2 percent increase. The VA serves approximately 18.2 million (and counting) veterans, and its current budget makes it the second largest component of discretionary spending, second only to the source of its clientele, the Department of War.

So, the total budget for war and its aftermath is really a combination of all these sources, and it totals \$1.1 trillion (\$1,115,300,000,000) for fiscal year 2021. Admittedly, this isn't the standard way of presenting the budget, which focuses on the top line of each department without adding them together. But add them we must if we're to have a clear understanding of the enormous costs of the American empire. Plus, total expenditures present a jaw-dropping amount of opportunity cost, as economists say, for action on climate change, infrastructure projects, universal health care, and education. And when a drone attack on a wedding in Afghanistan kills 30 men, women, and children, how many young men vow to join the fight against U.S. imperialism? Ten in Afghanistan, plus 10 in the tribal areas of Pakistan, plus 20 somewhere in the Middle East, plus 10 scattered across Europe and the U.S.? Who knows, but the War on Terror facilitated by large war budgets creates terrorists as least as fast as we kill them. This obscene amount of military spending, repeated year after year since 9/11, under both Democratic and Republican regimes, has

not made us safer. One could even argue that it has made us more vulnerable.

We're often told the U.S. has the finest, best trained, and best equipped military in the world; certainly, we have the most expensive. CNBC reports that the U.S. accounts for 37 percent of the world's military spending, and the National Priorities project notes that the U.S. war budget is larger than the combined budgets of the next seven nations – which includes our new/old Cold War competitors China and Russia.

Opensecrets.org reports that the U.S. is home to five of the 10 largest defense contractors in the world, and American companies account for at least 57 percent of all arms sales, racking up \$398 billion in global sales. In comparison Russia, the second largest arms dealer, sold \$37.7 billion in weapons (China isn't included because reliable data doesn't exist). General Dynamics (\$19.5 billion), Northrop Grumman (\$22.4 billion), Raytheon (\$23.9 billion), Boeing (\$26.9 billion), and Lockheed Martin (\$44.9 billion) are the top five U.S. weapons manufacturers. It's worth nothing that just one company, Lockheed Martin, sells more weapons than Russia.

It might seem reasonable to ask what we're getting for our money. Well, it turns out that we're not getting as much as we should for a gushing spigot of dollars. The U.S. has not won a war since it was part of the Allied Forces in World War II, and the only "war" our arms build-up might be said to have prevented is a nuclear war. The Cold War period of our history wasn't cold; there were dozens of hot wars around the world, many of which involved the U.S. Korea and Vietnam are merely the largest and best known, but there were wars and coups in Central and South America, Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Asia in which the U.S. participated, if not precipitated. In more recent times, we're involved, directly and indirectly, with wars in

Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen, and an unknown number of countries in Africa. But we're still faced by conundrum of why the best armed and trained military in the world cannot win, or even reliably end, a war. It seems that we have incompetent generals and mad politicians, and the rest of us are fools for tolerating them.

Why are we doing this? The short answer is money.

Defense contractors make money, a lot of money, when we're at war, so they have no interest in ending them. According to Open Secrets.Org, lobbyists for defense contractors, 73 percent of whom are former government employees, spent \$111,295,096 on Washington politicians in 2019, so it's not in the interest of politicians to seek an end to war. Generals, the men and women charged with prosecuting war, know their retirement incomes improve significantly if they sit on a defense industry corporate board. Ending a war makes generating profits more difficult, and the winning general might not be offered a post-retirement board seat, so generals have strong motive for not ending wars that are the source of profits for their corporate masters.

George Orwell was right:

“

*The war is not meant to be won, it is meant to be continuous. Hierarchical society is only possible on the basis of poverty and ignorance . . . In principle the war effort is always planned to keep society on the brink of starvation. The war is waged by the ruling group against its own subjects and its object is not the victory over either Eurasia or East Asia, but to keep the very structure of society intact.*

The “ruling group” of the 21st century are capitalists and their profits, and our endless discretionary wars are not Eurasia against East Asia, as Orwell’s novel has it, but the working class of the U.S. against the working classes of nearly every non-European country on the planet.

## Military Side of MIC in Madison

What of the military industrial complex (MIC) in Madison, a medium-sized, comparatively liberal city in the midwestern heartland of America? Surely it has little to do with the vast grasping octopus of militarism and defense sales. Surely.

Ah, no. Madison, as the self-help mantra goes, “leans in” to the military industrial complex. Let’s begin with the most obvious artifacts.

Truax Field, home of the Wisconsin Air National Guard’s 115th Fighter Wing and its F-16 aircraft, tops Madison’s list. A frequent source of noise complaints, and a contributor to air and PFAS pollution, the wing is subject to new controversy because of a U.S. Air Force proposal to base F-35 fighters in Madison. In addition to being a grossly over-priced (\$78 million per plane) and minimally functioning aircraft (800 unresolved software flaws, 13 of which are “must fix,” and a 25mm rotary cannon doesn’t shoot straight), the deployment of F-35s to Madison will increase noise levels (50 percent after-burner use) and air pollution, and construction at Truax Field will stir up PFAS in the soil, contributing to water pollution (one well in Madison is already closed). The greatest impacts will be felt by working class neighborhoods around the airport.

In addition to the Air National Guard, the headquarters detach-



ment of the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 64th Troop Command, along with the 54th Civil Support Team, is based in Madison. The Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs, commanded by Adjutant General Brigadier General

“  
*Madison, as the self-help mantra goes, “leans in” to the military industrial complex.*

Joane Mathews (who reports to Governor Evers), which supports Guard units statewide, is also in Madison. There are three U.S. Army Reserve Centers and U.S. Naval and Marine Reserves components in the city.

Casting a wider net, there are seven military recruiting stations in Madison: three Army, two Air Force, and one each for the Navy and Marines. The University of Wisconsin in Madison also recruits students for the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs it offers for each branch of service. The military pays tuition, room and board, and a monthly stipend to students enrolled in any of the programs, which makes it attractive to students from low income families. Students in ROTC earn a military officer commission while completing an undergraduate degree, and after graduation they enter the military for at least five years (guaranteed employment is a valuable benefit in today’s economy). To support ROTC, the

university has a Military Science program (Army), an Aerospace Studies program (Air Force), and a Naval Science program (Navy and Marines). Non-ROTC students can also take courses, which have titles that might appeal to a larger audience: Leadership, Leadership and Teamwork, Leadership and Ethics, etc. To the extent such courses appeal to non-ROTC students, they are points of recruitment and an opportunity to normalize the military and its way of thinking into everyday life.

There are no Junior ROTC programs in Madison High Schools, so military recruiters do not have a “primed” source of recruitment in schools. However, recruiters do have access to students during career and college days, and, as part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, schools are required to provide military recruiters with the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of high school students.

Finally, the William S. Middleton Veterans Administration (VA) Hospital in Madison is a major employer in the Madison area. It serves 180,000 veterans in Wisconsin and Illinois. In addition to the main hospital, it also operates a primary care clinic in Madison West.

### Industry (Business) Side of MIC in Madison

That's the explicitly military half of the military-industrial complex, but what about the industrial half? It's . . . rather large, given the size of Madison's economy. According to the latest data available on GovernmentContractsWon.com, between 2000 and 2018 there were 336 defense contractors in Madison, working on 5,358 contracts valued at \$1,856,584,086. Even though it's spread over eight years, it indicates that the military makes a significant financial contribution to Madison's economy.

In 2018, the latest year for which data is available, Madison companies won 769 defense contracts, for a total of \$96,515,973.

Some of the contracts are tiny, such as a \$3,600 contract awarded to the American Society of Agronomy, or a \$6,895 contract awarded to a construction engineering company. In fact, a typical 2018 defense vendor in Madison has one to 10 contracts worth less than (sometimes significantly less than) \$500,000.

In terms of the number of contracts won, the largest defense vendor was Wisconsin Aviation Madison, which was awarded 523 contracts valued at \$1,244,372. The company provides general aviation services, most likely for the Wisconsin Air National Guard.

The largest dollar value of defense contracts in 2018 were issued to the Wisconsin Physicians Services Insurance Corporation. It received only two contracts, but their combined value was \$71,816,527. Over the entire reporting period (2000 to 2018), the value of Wisconsin Physicians contracts was \$1,290,551,122!

Other items of interest. The University of Wisconsin System (presumably not just Madison, but significantly Madison) won defense contracts worth \$38,796,563 between 2000 and 2018. Madison Area Technical College won three contracts worth a total of \$54,477.

The City of Madison had nine contracts worth \$763,325. More ominous, perhaps, is the Wisconsin Department of Justice's 28 contracts for \$199,495.

### Significance of MIC in Madison

The Military-Industrial Complex is embedded in Madison's economy, on both the military and the industrial (business) sides of the equation. This opens potential new avenues for protest and pressure to reduce the war budget.

Opportunities: (1) Regular picketing at military recruiting stations and coordinated picketing at all of them simultaneously on select days (Armed Forces Day, during a build-up to U.S. military action) will help raise awareness of the ubiquity of the military in our lives. The anniversary of the establishment of a branch of the military is also good day to picket specific locations. Counter-recruitment materials can be distributed. (2) Military recruiters have an advantage not available to counter-recruiters: the names, addresses, and phone numbers of students. As part of counter-recruitment efforts, it might be useful to reach parents of students as early as the 8th grade, to let them know they can opt out of the military recruiter notification system when their child enters high school. (3) Although the businesses in Madison receiving defense contracts are small and diffuse, an informational picket of the offices of Wisconsin Physicians Services Insurance Corporation might be useful, although as part of Medicare for All rather than for anti-militarism purposes. A private insurance company reaping a billion dollars in taxpayer money might raise questions in many people's minds.

Although significant cuts to the war budget are long overdue, activists need to be aware of the local impacts of budget cuts and, if possible, develop strategies to mitigate the negative effects on

the city.

Impacts from budget cuts: (1) An excess supply of commercial real estate as defense companies reduce their size, shut down, or move away. An excess supply will depress the commercial real estate market. (2) An excess supply of homes and apartments, as defense contractor employees move. This will depress the housing market and if you're a homeowner, that's bad news, because the value of your home will decline. However, if you're a homebuyer, it's good news and for the same reason. A glut of vacant apartments will reduce rental rates, which is good news for renters but bad news for owners. (3) A decline in employment. Fewer defense contracts means fewer jobs, and if defense employees without jobs remain in Madison, the city's unemployment rate will rise. Total wages and salaries will fall, which will negatively impact retail sales, potentially causing a new downward spiral. (4) Sales tax revenue will decline, affecting services dependent on them. (5) Small defense contractors will fail. Although they may only have small defense contracts, they are likely important to the profitability/viability of the small businesses who receive them.

Militarism has invaded Madison, creating a mostly unnoticed presence in our lives. Activists can make this presence obvious through actions at military recruiting stations and select defense contractor offices. Joining forces with environmental groups, and even Medicare for All advocates, can increase our impact.

But the war industry also pumps a significant amount of money into Madison's economy. Activists – and business owners and city planners – need to be aware of the likely impacts of a long overdue reduction in the war budget. Planning for alternative uses of the capabilities of small businesses – and the expertise of their employees – will help mitigate negative impacts. 

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