

Buffalo Forum



Local Publication of the
U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization

Workers of all countries, unite!

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October 21, 2016

Vol. 20 #10

STOP ALL FUNDING NOW

U.S. Guilty of War Crimes in Yemen

The U.S. has been militarily funding and politically backing the brutal and repeated bombing of Yemen, as well as continuing to use illegal drone warfare there. While the U.S. backed actions are being done by Saudi Arabia, it is the U.S. that is completely responsible for the repeated

bombings — destroying schools, hospitals, pharmaceutical factories, residential areas and most recently a funeral home packed with mourners, killing 140 people and injuring many more. These are war crimes, organized and politically backed

U.S. War Crimes in Yemen • 3

TEACHERS, STUDENTS PARENTS

Strengthening Organization Key to Advancing Fight for Right to Education

There are some who consider that now that the contract has been settled, the main organizing for the right to education has ended. On the contrary, now is the time to step up organizing efforts and strengthen organization, both that of the union and independent efforts, such as those to refuse receivership. Independent organizing

is not restricted by the many laws and regulations the union must contend with. It also can better serve to put initiative in our hands, as organizing actions against receivership last year showed.

Oppose Receivership

Receivership is one of the
Strengthen Organizing Work • 14

Buffalo Teachers Secure New Contract

Buffalo teachers and their union, the Buffalo Teachers Federation (BTF) secured a new three-year contract, the first in twelve years. On October 17, the Council of Delegates, comprised of elected building delegates from each school, along with the BTF Executive Board, met at Kleinhans to discuss the contract proposal. Their discussion of more than two hours was followed by a meeting of the membership. Both voted, by a voice vote, to

ratify the contract, despite the fact that the contract itself was not available at the meetings. A summary of changes was provided instead.

Many questions were raised, especially at the Council meeting. A number of teachers were concerned about the speed with which the vote was being taken, especially given it was twelve years in coming. Negotiations only concluded hours before the meeting so

Teachers Secure Contract • 13

U.S. INTERFERENCE AND HURRICANE MATHEW

Haiti Faces Serious Challenges with Support of Cuba and Venezuela

Hurricane Mathew struck Caribbean countries and the United States between September 29 and October 9. It caused flashfloods in Jamaica on October 2, despite being hundreds of miles away from the center of the storm. The power and rapid strengthen-

ing of the storm has been attributed to climate change that impacts both ocean temperatures and those of the air. Mathew made landfall in Haiti on the morning of October 4 and then Cuba that same evening as a Category 4 hurricane (sustained winds of 131 to 155

miles per hour, mph). It then traveled north to the Bahamas as a Category 3 (sustained winds of 111 to 130 mph) and Category 4 hurricane. Mathew made landfall in Florida October 7 and South Carolina on October 8 as a Category 1 hurricane (sustained winds of

74 to 95 mph), causing severe flooding. It was downgraded to a post-tropical storm on October 9 as it moved away from North Carolina. In the U.S. the severe flooding and related damages were responsible for 44 deaths, major

Haiti Faces Challenges • 7



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BUFFALO

Protest Targets Attacks on Immigrant Workers

A protest October 20 targeted raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) October 18 at four Mexican restaurants in Buffalo. It is reported that more than 20 people were arrested in the raids and now face deportation. This follows a previous raid in Orchard Park where 13 people were racially profiled while at a school playground in Orchard Park. The government has said they will not make raids at schools and hospitals where children are present but clearly this is not the case. No crime had been committed by any of the workers and parents involved.

Those protesting stood firm in saying No Human Being is Illegal and calling for the release of those arrested and an end to deportations and separation of families. They urged all to stand against the current immigration system which encourages racist government profiling and unjustly targets our fellow workers and neighbors. As the press release stated, "We call for ICE and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to stop their abuse of our immigrant neighbors," adding "We Buffalonians will not be silent as our friends, neighbors and fellow workers are rounded up and deported."

YEMENIS OPPOSE BOMBINGS

The Big Criminal is Obama Himself

On October 9, thousands of Yemenis gathered at the United Nations building in Sana'a calling for an international investigation into the U.S.-backed Saudi assault on a funeral. The attack was carried out with warplanes and munitions sold to the Saudi-led coalition by the United States. The U.S. Air Force continues to provide midair refueling to Saudi warplanes. According to the U.N., more than 4,000 civilians have been killed and more than 7,000 injured since the bombings began last year. Airstrikes have reportedly caused about 60 percent of the deaths. Below we provide comments by Yemeni journalist Nasser Arrabyee, taken from an interview done on Democracy Now.

NASSER ARRABYEE: No single Yemeni doubts that Saudi Arabia was not the main one who did this crime at all, because it is not the first, it is not the last. Saudi Arabia has been committing war crimes since March 26, 2015.

The big criminal is Obama himself. This is how Yemenis see the situation, because every Yemeni believes that Saudi Arabia would not have done that bombing at all, would not have done a war against

Yemen, without the approval of Obama. And it is clear that Obama wanted to appease the Saudis after the Iranian nuclear deal. But, unfortunately, he appeased them with Yemeni blood. Obama is leading the world to the law of jungle. No killer except Obama in the eyes of Yemenis now, because everybody knows Saudi Arabia and what it would do if there was not the approval of Obama.

Obama has been killing Yemen humans with Saudi hands for about 20 months now. The reason why we say Obama is killing Yemen, is killing Yemen human beings, is simply because Obama is cooperating. This is known to everyone. But it is not only a matter of cooperating with the refueling of bombers or with the intelligence or with the logistic things. It is also Obama's will to support the Saudi Wahhabi regime, which means to us that Obama now is supporting al Qaeda, ISIS, because Obama is saying he's supporting the internationally recognized government, the exiled Yemeni government based in Riyadh now. Obama should know — and I think he knows — that three members, at least — of this government are designated by Obama, by the U.S. Treasury



Department, as global terrorists. I can give you the names now. Three, at least, of this government in Riyadh are al Qaeda, ISIS leaders. They are leading their operators here in Yemen, using the American weapons, using the Saudi money. This is what Obama is doing in Yemen. Obama is leading the Americans to the law of jungle and the world to the law of jungle.

We want to salute the American heroes, despite all the war crimes of Obama, because there are a lot of people who — I mean, the Americans, all the American people, we respect them. We know that they are with us.

I • U.S. WAR CRIMES IN YEMEN

by the U.S. Without U.S. backing the Saudis could not continue, which makes the U.S. the biggest war criminal.

The U.S. also includes billions in war funds. Another \$1.15 billion is currently planned, with Obama so far offering more than \$115 billion in arms sales to the Saudis during his administration. This includes various weapons, attack helicopters, war ships and the endless bombs. The U.S. also provides targeting, surveillance and in-flight refueling of the U.S.-made Saudi bombers to ensure they can continue uninterrupted.

The U.S.-backed blockade of the country also means that vital food and medicine are being cut off, impacting mainly women and children. More than 1.5 million children are suffering malnutrition, 370,000 of them acute. About 80 percent

of food supplies are imported, with the blockade preventing most of these goods from reaching Yemen. Of the population of about 26 million Yemenis, 21.2 million — 82 percent of the population — are now dependent on humanitarian aid, which often does not arrive, and 14.4 million have insufficient food.

It is the U.S. that is criminally responsible for the deaths and destruction being rained down on Yemen. All funding must stop now, and all political backing and support ended.

The U.S. efforts are to keep in place a government of their choosing, while blocking the people of Yemen from determining their own affairs. Yemenis have a long history of struggle for their rights and for organizing to decide their own path. This includes the development

of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in the southern part of the country in 1969, lasting until 1990. The struggle taking place now is not primarily one of religious conflict, as it is often presented, but rather one of the people of Yemen organizing to be free of foreign interference and deciding their own affairs themselves. It is the U.S. that strives to inflame religious differences and pit the people against each other, as it has done in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria. It is U.S. interests for world empire that are served, not those of the Yemenis.

Buffalo Forum condemns the U.S./Saudi crimes against Yemen and demands an immediate end to all funding and support, and removal of all U.S. troops and weaponry from Yemen and the entire Middle East.

Hiding U.S. Role in Yemen Slaughter So Bombing Can Be Sold as “Self-Defense”

Adam Johnson, October 16, 2016, Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR)

To hear U.S. corporate media tell it, the U.S. was dragged into a brand new war on October 12.

U.S. destroyers in the Gulf of Aden launched air strikes against Houthi rebels, a Shia insurgent group currently withstanding a massive bombing campaign from a Saudi-led coalition in a year-and-half conflict between largely Shia rebels and the Saudi-backed Sunni government in Yemen. The Pentagon insisted that cruise missiles had been fired onto the USS Mason on Sunday and Wednesday from Houthi-controlled territory, and called the U.S. air strikes a “limited self-defense” response.

Needless to say, U.S. media followed the Pentagon’s lead. The fact that the United States has been literally fueling Saudi warplanes for 18 months while selling weapons and providing intelligence support to the Gulf monarchy — acts which even the U.S. State Department believes could expose the U.S. to war crimes prosecution — was either downplayed or ignored. Nor did media recall the U.S.’s long history of drone warfare in Yemen, where the military and CIA have been carrying out long-range assassinations since 2002, killing more than 500 people.

So far, most print media reporting has at least bothered to briefly put the attack and counterattack in broader context, noting the U.S. role in the brutal bombing campaign that has left over 4,000 dead, including over 140 bombed at a funeral in Sana’a last week — even as the stories’ framing downplayed the U.S.’s history in the conflict. The *New York Times* (10/12/16), for example, said in the second paragraph of its report on the air strikes (emphasis added):

“The strikes against the Houthi rebels marked the first time the United States has become involved militarily in the civil war between the Houthis, an indigenous Shiite group with loose connections to Iran, and the Yemeni government, which is backed by Saudi Arabia and other Sunni nations.”



More than 100,000 in Sana’a, protest U.S./Saudi bombings against Yemen

But the *Times* story went on to acknowledge, somewhat contradictorily, that the U.S. had been “quietly providing military support to a Saudi Arabia-led bombing campaign against the rebels since last year.” The story noted that the U.S. had been “providing intelligence and Air Force tankers to refuel the coalition’s jets and bombers. The American military has refueled more than 5,700 aircraft involved in the bombing campaign.... More than 4,000 civilians have been killed since the bombing began, according to the United Nations’ top human rights official.”

TV news reports, on the other hand, kept the spin and left out the context. They mostly failed to mention that the U.S. has been assisting the Saudi assault on the rebels for a year and a half, and framed the incident as a U.S. warship being attacked while simply minding its own business in international waters.

CBS’s David Martin, fresh off his 14-minute Pentagon commercial last month, did not mention the Saudi bombing campaign or explain the U.S.’s role in the war for his segment for CBS This Morning (10/13/16). In fact, Martin never uttered the word “Saudi” or named any of the other countries involved in Yemen, only noting that the rebels are “trying to

overthrow the government.” The average viewer would come away thinking the U.S. Navy ship just happened to be in the neighborhood when it was randomly fired upon.

ABC’s Martha Raddatz (Good Morning America, 10/13/16) likewise did not inform the viewer that the U.S. has been a party to the civil war for 18 months. She also never used the word “Saudi” or referred to the brutal bombing campaign; she barely even alluded to there being a conflict at all.

CNN’s Barbara Starr (CNN, 10/13/16) joined the club, omitting the U.S. and Saudi roles in the conflict entirely. She went one step further and repeatedly speculated about “direct” Iranian involvement in the Mason attack and what that would entail, despite there being zero evidence and no suggestion from the Pentagon of Iranian participation. Starr even conflated Al Qaeda and Iran, despite their being on opposite sides of the conflict:

“The Yemeni missiles were fairly old but had been outfitted with highly lethal warheads, the kind Al Qaeda and Iran know how to make.”

The implication was that Al Qaeda might have somehow provided Houthi rebels with missiles, but this, of course,

Hiding U.S. Role in Yemen • 6

U.S. and Britain Continue to Actively Participate in Saudi War Crimes, Targeting of Yemeni Civilians

Glenn Greenwald, October 10 2016, The Intercept

From the start of the hideous Saudi bombing campaign against Yemen 18 months ago, two countries have played active, vital roles in enabling the carnage: the U.S. and Britain. The atrocities committed by the Saudis would have been impossible without their steadfast, aggressive support.

The Obama administration “has offered to sell \$115 billion worth of weapons to Saudi Arabia over its eight years in office, more than any previous U.S. administration,” as *The Guardian* reported this week, and also provides extensive surveillance technology. As *The Intercept* documented in April, “In his first five years as president, Obama sold \$30 billion more in weapons than President Bush did during his entire eight years as commander in chief.”

Most important, according to the Saudi foreign minister, although it is the Saudis who have ultimate authority to choose targets, “British and American military officials are in the command and control center for Saudi airstrikes on Yemen” and “have access to lists of targets.” In sum, while this bombing campaign is invariably described in Western media outlets as “Saudi-led,” the U.S. and Britain are both central, indispensable participants. [...]

From the start, the U.S.- and British-backed Saudis have indiscriminately and at times deliberately bombed civilians, killing thousands of innocent people. From Yemen, Iona Craig and Alex Potter have reported extensively on the widespread civilian deaths caused by this bombing campaign. As the Saudis continued to recklessly and intentionally bomb civilians, the American and British weapons kept pouring into Riyadh, ensuring that the civilian massacres continued. Every once and awhile, when a particularly gruesome mass killing made its way into the news, Obama and various British officials would issue cursory, obligatory statements expressing “concern,” then go right back to fueling the attacks.

This weekend, as American attention was devoted to Donald Trump, one of the most revolting massacres took place. On Saturday, warplanes attacked a funeral

gathering in Sana’a, repeatedly bombing the hall where it took place, killing over 100 people and wounding more than 500. [...]

The Obama White House, through its spokesperson Ned Price, condemned what it called “the troubling series of attacks striking Yemeni civilians” — attacks, it did not note, it has repeatedly supported — and lamely warned that “U.S. security cooperation with Saudi Arabia is not a blank check.” That is exactly what it is. The 18 months of bombing supported by the U.S. and Britain has, as the *NY Times* put it, “largely failed, while reports of civilian deaths have grown common, and much of the country is on the brink of famine.”

It has been known from the start that the Saudi bombing campaign has been deadly, and yet Obama and the British government continue to play central roles. A UN report obtained in January by *The Guardian* “uncovered ‘widespread and systematic’ attacks on civilian targets in violation of international humanitarian law;” the report found that “the coalition had conducted airstrikes targeting civilians and civilian objects, in violation of international humanitarian law, including camps for internally displaced persons and refugees; civilian gatherings, including weddings; civilian vehicles, including buses; civilian residential areas; medical facilities; schools; mosques; markets, factories and food storage warehouses; and other civilian infrastructure.”

But what was not known, until a Reuters report by Warren Strobel and Jonathan Landay, is that Obama was explicitly warned not only that the Saudis were committing war crimes, but that the U.S. itself could be legally regarded as complicit in them:

“The Obama administration went ahead with a \$1.3 billion arms sale to Saudi Arabia last year despite warnings from some officials that the United States could be implicated in war crimes for supporting a Saudi-led air campaign in Yemen that has killed thousands of civilians, according to government documents and the accounts of current and former officials.”

State Department officials were privately

skeptical of the Saudi military’s ability to target rebels without killing civilians and destroying “critical infrastructure” needed for Yemen to recover, according to the emails and other records obtained by Reuters and interviews with nearly a dozen officials with knowledge of those discussions.

In other words, the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize winner was explicitly advised that he might be a collaborator in war crimes by arming a campaign that deliberately targets civilians, and continued to provide record-breaking amounts of arms to aid their prosecution. None of that should be surprising: It would be difficult for Obama to condemn “double-tap” strikes of the kind the Saudis just perpetrated — where first responders or mourners are targeted — given that he himself has used that tactic, commonly described as a hallmark of terrorism.

The U.S. and Britain are the two leading countries when it comes to cynically exploiting human rights concerns and the laws of war to attack their adversaries. They and their leading columnists love to issue pretty, self-righteous speeches about how other nations — those primitive, evil ones over there — target civilians and commit war crimes. Yet here they both are, standing firmly behind the Saudis, arming it to the teeth with the full and undeniable knowledge that they are enabling massacres that in many cases, deliberately target civilians.

These 18 months of atrocities have barely merited a mention in the U.S. election, despite the key role Hillary Clinton, has played in arming the Saudis, to say nothing of the millions of dollars her family’s foundation has received from its regime (her opponent, Donald Trump, has barely uttered a word about the issue, and himself has received millions in profits from various Saudi oligarchs). [...]

There are some nations on the planet with credibility to condemn war crimes and the deliberate targeting of civilians. The two countries who have spent close to two years arming Saudi Arabia in its ongoing slaughter of Yemeni civilians are most certainly not among them.

AS NEW ELECTION SCHEDULE ANNOUNCED

Post-Hurricane Interventions, Health Crisis, Gold Rush, and Campaigning Begin

Kim Ives, Haiti Liberté

Two days after it said it would, the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) finally announced on October 14 Haiti's new electoral timetable. The presidential and legislative elections that had been scheduled for October 9, with run-offs on January 8, will now be held on November 20 and January 29 respectively. The final results will be announced on February 20, 2017.

Haiti had been hoping to inaugurate a newly elected president on February 7, 2017, a year after one should have been inaugurated constitutionally in 2016. The new 2017 inauguration date, which will be set by President Jocelerme Privert's interim government, has not yet been announced.

The October 9 presidential election, which was to be a redo of a fraudulent polling in 2015, had to be rescheduled due to the extensive damage caused by Hurricane Matthew, which passed directly over the cities of Les Cayes and Jérémie on Haiti's southern peninsula on October 4.

According to an internal Organization of American States report dated October 11, of 157 voting centers in Haiti's southern department, 112 (71%) were damaged and 29 (18%) were inaccessible. In the Grande-Anse department, investigators were able to visit or verify only 26 of its 106 voting centers. Of those visited, 23 were damaged, and 31 of the total were inaccessible.

In the Nippes department, investigators visited or verified 41 of the 85 voting centers and found 22 of them damaged, while 46 of the total were inaccessible.

Furthermore, many Haitians in the south lost their homes and their voter identification cards in the storm. The three hard-hit departments are home to about 1.17 million of Haiti's 6.19 million registered voters.

There was also storm damage to voting centers and homes in five of Haiti's other seven departments, the report said.

The OAS report warned that repair and reconstruction of voting centers will be very difficult "in the medium and long term" because flooding washed away or

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is absurd: The Houthis and Al Qaeda are sectarian enemies and have been fighting each other throughout the civil war. Never mind; Starr needed to raise the stakes and throw out as many bogeymen as she could.

MSNBC's Rachel Maddow (10/13/16) delivered the worst of the batch. Not only did she too omit the Saudi bombing campaign and the U.S.'s role in it (again, leaving the viewer to believe the attack was a total non sequitur), she spun the issue in tedious partisan terms, recalling Trump's statement he would attack Iranian warships that threatened the U.S.:

"You might remember Republican candidate Donald Trump said in an off-handed remark during the campaign that if Iranian ships got too close to American ships and if Iranian sailors made rude gestures towards our American sailors under President Trump, we'd blow those Iranian ships out of the water. Well, Iranian ships and American ships are now in the same waters, off the coast of Yemen in the middle of war, with Tomahawk missiles and cruise missiles already flying. Steady on."

Why are American ships in those waters? Why are Tomahawk missiles "flying"? The conflict is never explained; it is only brought up so that Maddow can warn that the GOP nominee could make things worse. Of course, it is not Trump who backed the Saudis in an air campaign that has left thousands dead, but Obama — and it is Hillary Clinton who as secretary of State enthusiastically pushed to sell warplanes to Riyadh (*The Intercept*, 2/22/16). But such facts would mess up the election-season narrative.

Maddow, like the other reports, used the loaded modifier "Iran-backed" to describe the Houthis (even though experts and Pentagon officials think Iran's support is overblown). This is a stark asymmetry, considering that none of the reports referred to the Yemeni government as "U.S.-backed" or "Saudi-backed." She also said that the Navy blamed the attacks on the Houthis, when the Pentagon only claims the missiles came from rebel territory, and could very well be from other allied groups (*New York Times*, 10/13/16).

Not only is the U.S.'s backing of Saudi

Arabia omitted from all these reports, the word "Saudi" is not uttered in any of them. The viewer is given the impression that the war, aside from Iranian meddling, is an entirely internal affair — when it actually involves over 15 different countries, mostly Sunni monarchies propping up the Yemeni government — and that the rebels just randomly decided to pick a fight with the largest military in the history of the world.

The Houthis, for their part, vehemently deny having carried out the attack on the *Mason*, and there is no publicly available evidence it was them or allied forces. It should be noted, however, that Houthi forces took credit for sinking a United Arab Emirates supply ship two weeks earlier.

As is often the case with war, the issue of "first blood" — or who started the fighting — gets muddled. Governments naturally want global audiences and their own citizens to view their actions as defensive — a necessary response to aggression, not aggression itself. U.S. corporate media are aiding this official spin in their reporting on the U.S. bombing of Yemen.

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power outages and hundreds of millions in homes lost and damages to towns and communities. The storm also impacted voting rights in several southern states (see p. 8).

Mathew caused massive damage in Haiti, with many hundreds of deaths and hundreds of thousands homeless. The poisoning of Haiti's water already caused by the UN occupation troops and lack of reconstruction from the 2010 earthquake and this latest hurricane have now unleashed yet another cholera epidemic. Instead of ensuring safe water, useless vaccines are being tested in what is considered a "live exercise" for the pharmaceutical monopolies. Planned elections were also impacted (see p.6).

Buffalo Forum sends its deepest sympathies all those impacted in the U.S. and the Caribbean and gives its full support for the internationalist humanitarian response of Cuba and Venezuela. We also vehemently reject attempts by the U.S. to exploit this tragic situation for self-serving aims, as occurred following the 2010 earthquake. Billions in funds were raised in the U.S. and elsewhere for relief efforts, but much of it did not reach Haitians. The Pentagon also further militarized conditions then and now is again sending a warship and hundreds of marines to deliver "assistance" — but also occupy Haiti.

Haiti Most Severely Impacted

Of the countries struck by Hurricane Matthew, Haiti is the most severely affected. This is due not only to the intensity of the storm when it hit but especially because of political chaos caused in the country by foreign intervention and exploitation, especially on the part of the U.S., and the UN mission to Haiti (MINUSTAH) it orchestrated. This interference has deprived Haitians of sovereignty over their affairs, introduced the deadly cholera epidemic and left Haiti vulnerable to natural disasters and further exploitation particularly in its times of greatest need.

The United Nations estimates that 1.4 million people in Haiti require assistance. Some 20,000 homes were destroyed along with crops and food reserves, at least 300



UN tanks in Port-au-Prince, Haiti

schools have been damaged and some towns and villages have been nearly wiped off the map, the UN and news agencies report. "It seems to me like a nuclear bomb went off," said Paul Edouarzin, a UN Environmental Program employee based near Port-a-Piment to Reuters. "In terms of destruction — environmental and agricultural — I can tell you 2016 is worse than [the 2010 earthquake]," he added.

Under these circumstances, the cholera epidemic that was finally brought under control — caused by improper sanitation by UN forces — now has reemerged. UNICEF warns that overflowing rivers, stagnant waters, and animal and human corpses are perfect breeding grounds for waterborne diseases. "Every day that goes by increases the threat of cholera. We are in a race against time to get to these children before diseases do," Marc Vincent, UNICEF Representative for Haiti, said in a press statement.

Immediate Internationalist Aid Provided by Cuba and Venezuela

Cuba and Venezuela have once again distinguished themselves by being amongst the first countries to provide the humanitarian assistance required by Haiti, as was the case during the 2010 earthquake.

This rapid response has everything to do with a profound policy of providing internationalist assistance which benefits the people in a concrete way and, in the case of Venezuela, in recognition of the historic debt owed to this sister nation for providing assistance to the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean in their anti-colonial independence struggles.[1]

By October 7, Venezuela had sent three lots of humanitarian aid, the last of which contained 660 tons of food, medication, water, blankets and mattresses. It also included 450 tons of heavy machinery to remove rubble and rehabilitate roads.

The following week, Venezuela sent 50 health professionals to Haiti. Vice-President for Social Development and Revolutionizing the Missions Jorge Arreaza confirmed on October 10 that the Simón Bolívar Humanitarian Task Force was dispatched to assist the "beloved people" of Haiti and will work in the country for approximately eight days. The team includes 40 epidemiologists and 10 general medical practitioners. The doctors are recent graduates of the Salvador Allende Latin American School of Medicine located in Caracas, Venezuelanalysis informs. The school is

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the result of cooperation between Cuba and Venezuela.

"We reached Haiti with our solidarity; two boats and two planes have left and we will continue to extend our solidarity and humanitarian aid with the people of Haiti in every way," said President Nicolás Maduro on October 9. Maduro informed that a total of 200 doctors will travel to Haiti to offer medical assistance.

Cuba, despite also being hit by Hurricane Matthew, announced on October 7 that it is sending a 38-person medical brigade to Haiti, members of the renowned Henry Reeve International Contingent of Doctors Specialized in Disaster Situations and Serious Epidemics. These health personnel are greatly experienced in the hygienic-epidemiological field, ACN reports. The group is made up of three doctors, 10 hygienic-epidemiologic specialists and 10 technicians, among others. This group will work alongside some of the hundreds of Cuban health professionals already working in Haiti. Cuban doctors have been in Haiti since 1998, after Hurricane Georges.

Haitians Reject Repeat of Self-Serving "Assistance" from Foreign Exploiters

Haitians are extremely suspect of the so-called aid they received in the wake of the 2010 earthquake. This "assistance" did little to relieve their hardship while lining the pockets of various self-serving middlemen, including the Clintons.

Nadia Prupris, writing for Common Dreams on October 11, points out that "the legacy of foreign aid in Haiti has left many residents fearful of large organizations like the American Red Cross descending on the impoverished island. As Pro Publica and NPR revealed in a joint investigation last year, when Haiti was hit with a devastating earthquake in 2010, the American Red Cross raised half a billion dollars in aid and built a grand total of six new homes.

"Many observers [...] are urging those eager to support Hurricane Matthew relief efforts to donate to local grassroots groups instead of the American Red Cross and

other massive organizations."

Hillary Clinton, and former President Bill Clinton are also notorious for the role played by their Clinton Foundation to use billions of dollars in Haiti relief funds to enrich themselves, their friends and financial supporters, as well as open up Haiti for further exploitation by global monopolies. In response to a tweet from Bill Clinton about what the foundation was doing in Haiti following Hurricane Matthew, one person tweeted, "Is this a joke, you looted Haiti once already," while another responded, "Clintons still scamming off poor Haiti after a natural disaster."

TeleSUR points out, "With the help of corporate donors, the Clinton Foundation raised billions of dollars in relief assistance.

"Controversially, however, \$6 billion was spent on formaldehyde-riddled trailers distributed by a top Clinton campaign donor — Clayton Homes — that sickened Haitians left homeless by the earthquake, with trailer occupants complaining of headaches and other illnesses." The use of such trailers was similar to that imposed on victims of Katrina in New Orleans.

Similarly, ABC News reported on October 11 about the industrial park and sweatshop garment factory opened up in Haiti by the Clinton Foundation in the town of Caracol:

"The modern industrial park, with wide, clear roads connecting rows of low-slung warehouses, [was] paid for by the Inter-American Development Bank, which provided \$256.8 million in grants to support construction. The bank has donated \$1 million to \$5 million to the Clinton Foundation, according to its website. Large American retailers, including Wal-Mart and Gap Inc., have served as buyers for the clothes shipped from Haiti to the U.S. with special U.S. tax breaks. Wal-Mart has given \$1 million to \$5 million, and Gap has given \$100,000 to \$250,000 to the foundation. And in 2012, SAE-A, the Korean garment company that



Haitians protest foreign "assistance" for Mathew

was recruited to become the anchor tenant of the park, gave \$50,000 to \$100,000 to the foundation."

The Clintons and the U.S. more generally are known for their long history of occupying and interfering in Haiti, including removing democratically elected President Jean-Claude Aristide, supporting death squads, including the Tonton Makout and using disasters to openly bring in the Marines, as is occurring now. As Haitians themselves have said, they do not want or need such "assistance"!

Note

1. Simon Bolívar, leader of Latin America's greatest liberation struggles against Spanish colonial rule was aided greatly by the Haitian revolution. Haiti was the first independent nation in Latin America and the only nation in the world whose independence was gained as part of a successful slave rebellion. The Haitian president Pétion provided Bolívar and his forces sanctuary and protection and the possibility of launching new attacks against the Spanish. Within this, Haitian soldiers joined the fight for freedom in the rest of the Americas as part of Bolívar's army. With soldiers and vital material support provided by Haiti, Bolívar landed in Venezuela and fulfilled a promise to Pétion by issuing a decree granting slaves their freedom in territories under his control on June 2, 1816.

Lawsuits Extend Voter Registration Deadlines in States Affected by Hurricane Matthew

Facing South, October 21, 2016

Besides killing at least 44 people in the United States and causing widespread environmental damage, Hurricane Matthew raised concerns about voting rights in hard-hit Southern states, where flooding and power outages led to closures of local elections offices as registration deadlines approached.

In South Carolina, Governor Nikki Haley voluntarily extended the state's deadline for fax, email and online voter registration from October 8 to October 9. She also required elections boards to accept mailed registration forms postmarked October 11 or earlier.

But in three other Southern states affected by Matthew — Florida, Georgia and North Carolina — the Democratic Party and/or voting rights advocacy groups had to sue to get voter registration deadlines extended. Florida and North Carolina are considered toss-ups in the presidential election, while Georgia leans Republican but remains competitive.



Fayetteville, North Carolina rescue workers

Precious time lost in Florida
Before Matthew hit Florida on October 7,

killing at least nine people and inflicting at least \$218 million in property damage,
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6 • HURRICANE INTERVENTIONS

damaged many roads and bridges.

Meanwhile, food, clothes, relief supplies, and construction materials and machinery have been streaming into Haiti from Venezuela and the neighboring Dominican Republic (DR), whose president, Danilo Medina, visited Haiti on October 10. A convoy of over 500 vehicles from the DR crossed the border at Jimani/Malpasse on October 12, accompanied by 1,000 Dominican soldiers.

Haitians are already outraged by the October 13 renewal for six months of a United Nations Security Council mandate for 5,000 UN troops and police officers (known as MINUSTAH) to remain in Haiti until April 15, 2017. The force, originally proposed for six months in 2004, has now militarily occupied Haiti for over 12 years.

Therefore, the added deployment of Dominican troops on Haitian soil provoked a sharp backlash among Haitians, particularly after a 2013 Dominican law was used to strip citizenship from and expel thousands of Dominicans of Haitian ancestry over the past three years.

Haitians also jeered a food and water delivery by UN troops. "As [UN Secretary

General] Ban Ki-moon's convoy traveled in Aux Cayes for his public relations tour on October 16, angry Haitians shouted at the UN trucks, 'Get out of here! And take your food and water with you!' reported Haitian journalist Dady Chery.

As expected, there has also been an upsurge in cholera in Haiti's storm-ravaged south, as detailed in a poignant front-page article in the October 16 *New York Times*. The deadly disease was brought to Haiti by UN troops in October 2010, but the UN did not begin to admit its responsibility for the epidemic until this past August.

Unfortunately, the principal response of the UN and Washington to the post-storm cholera explosion is to push a supposed cholera vaccine called Sanchol.

"The current promotion of oral cholera vaccines is a deceitful campaign motivated by pure greed," explains Dady Chery, who is also a U.S. university biology professor. "Vaccination against cholera in Haiti right now is worse than useless. First, even inefficacious vaccines are risky, because the vaccines used on people in the Third World usually contain 6 to 30-fold higher concentrations than the WHO upper limit

of thiomersal, a mercury-based preservative that might be linked to autism. Secondly, no one knows which cholera bacteria are in Haiti! The cholera strain identified six years ago has now changed to the point where vaccines manufactured against it will not work at all. These vaccines will certainly be absolutely useless against the strains of cholera from Bangladesh [from the UN troops.] Finally, even under the best circumstances, when Shanchol is designed and used against a cholera with recently sequenced DNA, protection is poor to nonexistent. A field trial in Bangladesh in 2011 found that the vaccine conferred only 45% protection in all age groups after one year, including only about 17% protection in children under five, who are those most likely to die from cholera."

Given that mass vaccine campaigns offer a huge moneymaking opportunity for pharmaceutical companies, "Haitian authorities should be further advised that some of the supposed vaccinations might actually be drug trials for new vaccines," Dady Chery writes. "This would be nothing short of experimentation on Haitians as a large field laboratory." [...]

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Statement Regarding the NAACP's Resolution on a Moratorium on Charter Schools

NAACP, October 15, 2016

Members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Board of Directors ratified a resolution Saturday adopted by delegates at its 2016 107th National Convention calling for a moratorium on charter school expansion and for the strengthening of oversight in governance and practice.

"The NAACP has been in the forefront of the struggle for and a staunch advocate of free, high-quality, fully and equitably-funded public education for all children,"

said Roslyn M. Brock, Chairman of the National NAACP Board of Directors. "We are dedicated to eliminating the severe racial inequities that continue to plague the education system."

The National Board's decision to ratify this resolution reaffirms prior resolutions regarding charter schools and the importance of public education, and is one of 47 resolutions adopted today by the Board of Directors. The National Board's decision to ratify supports its 2014 Resolution,

'School Privatization Threat to Public Education', in which the NAACP opposes privatization of public schools and public subsidizing or funding of for-profit or charter schools. Additionally, in 1998 the Association adopted a resolution, which unequivocally opposed the establishment and granting of charter schools which are not subject to the same accountability and standardization of qualifications/certification of teachers as public schools and

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9 • LAWSUITS EXTEND VOTER REGISTRATION

Governor Rick Scott had declared a state of emergency. However, he opposed extending the October 11 voter registration deadline, so on October 9 the Florida Democratic Party sued him and Secretary of State Ken Detzner to secure an extension. Two days later, the Florida League of Women Voters and Brennan Center for Justice filed their own lawsuit seeking an extension.

U.S. District Judge Mark Walker granted a one-day extension in order to hold a hearing on October 12, when he extended the registration deadline to October 18. Walker called Scott's refusal to act "irrational" and "nonsensical."

"These voters have already had their lives (and, quite possibly, their homes) turned up-side down by Hurricane Matthew," Walker wrote. "They deserve a break, especially one that is mandated by the United States Constitution." [...]

In Georgia, 'An Affront to the Democratic Process'

Six days before Georgia's October 11 voter registration deadline, Governor Nathan Deal ordered the evacuation of parts of six coastal counties, areas that are home to 500,000 people. The hurricane killed at least three people in the state and caused at least \$90 million in damages so far. The elections board in Chatham County, which includes the city of Savannah, was closed from October 6 until October 11.

Post offices, where Georgia voters can also register, were also closed during this time.

But Deal refused to extend the registration deadline, prompting the ACLU, on behalf of the state NAACP and voter outreach group WickFORCE, to sue Deal and Secretary of State Brian Kemp in federal court.

The state argued that having to register new voters while also conducting early voting would "burden [its] ability to have an orderly election." Attorney Julie Ebenstein with the ACLU's Voting Rights Project called the state's position an "affront to the democratic process and to voter participation in this critical election."

On October 14, the judge ordered Georgia to extend only Chatham County's deadline by four days. The ACLU sued again, seeking deadline extensions in the other five affected counties where African Americans were disproportionately affected, but lost.

Typically a solidly red [Republican] state in presidential elections, Georgia is now considered only to "lean Republican."

Worries Linger in North Carolina

Matthew hit North Carolina on October 8, killing 26 people in the state and causing an estimated \$1.5 billion in damage. Widespread flooding after the storm displaced entire communities, including the historic African-American town of Princeville and

the city of Lumberton, which has significant African-American and Lumbee Indian populations.

But North Carolina Board of Elections Executive Director Kim Strach declined to extend the voter registration period in any affected county. So on the state's registration deadline of October 14, the North Carolina Democratic Party sued her.

Like their counterparts in Georgia, North Carolina officials argued that extending the registration deadline would burden elections officials preparing for early voting to begin on October 20. However, Superior Court Judge Donald Stephens ruled that Strach "failed to correctly exercise her discretion" in refusing to extend deadlines and granted a five-day extension in the 36 counties that were hit hardest by Matthew.

But concerns linger about the disaster's affect on voting in the state. After the extension was granted, for example, numerous county elections boards failed to advertise the changes on their websites. And while the state board set up a special Hurricane Matthew section on its website explaining the extension, it did not include details about the extension on its generic "election information" page.

North Carolina is also considered a toss-up state in the presidential contest, and close races there for U.S. Senate and governor make it one of the country's most critical battlegrounds.

OPPOSING PRIVATIZATION

NAACP Calls for Moratorium on Charter Schools

Steven Rosenfeld, *Alternet*

The charter school industry is coming under increased attack by national civil rights leaders for its unequal and anti-democratic practices in the communities it purports to help by privatizing K-12 schools.

On October 15, the board of directors at the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) ratified a resolution passed this summer at its national convention calling for a moratorium on charter expansion and strengthening charter oversight. The NAACP vote came after intense lobbying against the resolution from the industry and its allies, including editorials in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal*, a letter from black pro-charter legislators from California (where the sector gets almost anything it wants), and out-of-state protesters who were bused in and interrupted the NAACP's proceedings.

"We are moving forward to require that charter schools receive the same level of oversight, civil rights protections and provide the same level of transparency," required by public schools, said Roslyn M. Brock, NAACP chair, in a statement after the 63-member national board vote. "Our decision today is driven by a long-held principle and policy of the NAACP that high-quality, free, public education should be afforded to all children." [...]

There are now 6,700 charter schools across the country, educating 3 million students. The initial idea for charters was to create locally run experimental schools. However, as the industry has grown, especially since 2000, it has become dominated by corporate educational chains and franchises with ambitions to become national brands.

In a move increasingly typical of the K-12 privatization industry, the charter industry slammed the NAACP, claiming the industry is on the side of the children. This claim ignores what has become obvious to many in education circles: that charters are siphoning billions of



public funds away from traditional public schools and leaving behind a trail of deep problems that need to be addressed, including unequal admissions and overly test-centered academics; private school boards replacing locally elected and appointed officials; and a business model that encourages fiscal corruption and self-dealing at taxpayer expense.

"The civil-rights group votes to keep minorities trapped in poverty," said the *Wall Street Journal*'s Sunday editorial, asserting the NAACP does not know what is best for members. "If these gentry progressives are waiting for urban schools to reform without competition from charters or vouchers they are consigning generations

of children to diminished lives."

The *Journal* is implying it is the fault of public schools that poverty endures, not decisions and actions by the business leaders to withhold profits from the working- and middle-classes. Other top charter lobbyists issued statements saying the NAACP let down the grassroots, but failed to reveal that the moratorium critics they cited were organized by industry-funded groups.

"Across the country, charter public schools are working for hundreds of thousands of black families," Nina Rees, National Alliance for Public Charter Schools president and CEO, said. "[This vote] also ignores the thousands of families and black leaders who have stepped forward over the last two months urging the NAACP to reconsider their decision. More than 150 parents and grandparents traveled to Cincinnati to ask the NAACP, 'When are you going to start representing me?' The answer from the board's vote: Not today."

Rees' comments were among the more tempered. Before the vote, Politico.com reported that "Kevin P. Chavous, the founder of Democrats for Education Reform (DEFER), said ratifying the moratorium would be 'a new form of Jim Crow.'" Joel Klein, the ex-New York City school chancellor who sanctioned many charters under former mayor Michael Bloomberg, who has personally subsidized the school privatization movement, tweeted, "The 2nd 'A' in @NAACP stands for Advancement. Try telling that to many thousands of black families now on wait lists for charter schools."

The NAACP's call for a moratorium was hardly radical, nor was it isolated. Last summer, after its convention attendees approved the draft resolution, a national coalition of local civil rights groups called the Journey for Justice Alliance issued a statement affirming the need to halt charter expansion.

"The Journey for Justice Alliance wholeheartedly unites with the NAACP in
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11 • MORATORIUM ON CHARTER SCHOOLS

calling for a moratorium on charter school expansion and the Movement for Black Lives Platform, which calls for an end to school privatization, and we humbly appreciate having a role in developing the education demands,” the coalition said in August. “We also call for an end to school privatization with a moratorium on school closings, turnarounds, phase-outs and co-locations. We want an end to mayoral control, state takeovers and other privatization schemes that remove our right to

hold public officials accountable for the education policy they set; and curiously target cities whose public school systems serve primarily African-American and Latino children. These actions do not result in improved academic outcomes for our students, but grease the rails for brokering the responsibility of educating our children to private operators. Our members across this country are not blinded by the illusion of choice.” [...]

In several weeks, two states —

Massachusetts and Georgia — will vote on state ballot measures to allow charter expansion. In Massachusetts, U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren has come out against the privatization bid, despite support from the state’s Republican governor. However, in Georgia, the industry is asking voters to again amend their constitution to allow for charter expansion. If successful, as the industry was several years ago, half of Atlanta’s schools could be given to privatized charter operators.

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divert already-limited funds from public schools.

We are calling for a moratorium on the expansion of the charter schools at least until such time as:

(1) Charter schools are subject to the same transparency and accountability standards as public schools

(2) Public funds are not diverted to charter schools at the expense of the public school system

(3) Charter schools cease expelling students that public schools have a duty to educate and

(4) Charter schools cease to perpetuate de facto segregation of the highest performing children from those whose aspirations may be high but whose talents are not yet as obvious.

Historically the NAACP has been in strong support of public education and has denounced movements toward privatization that divert public funds to support non-public school choices.

“We are moving forward to require that charter schools receive the same level of oversight, civil rights protections and provide the same level of transparency, and we require the same of traditional public schools,” Chairman Brock said. “Our decision today is driven by a long held principle and policy of the NAACP that high quality,



free, public education should be afforded to all children.”

While we have reservations about charter schools, we recognize that many children attend traditional public schools that are inadequately and inequitably equipped to prepare them for the innovative and competitive environment they will face as adults. Underfunded and under-supported, these traditional public schools have much work to do to transform curriculum, prepare teachers, and give

students the resources they need to have thriving careers in a technologically advanced society that is changing every year. There is no time to wait.

“Our ultimate goal is that all children receive a quality public education that prepares them to be a contributing and productive citizen,” said Adora Obi Nweze, Chair of the National NAACP Education Committee, President of the Florida State Conference of the NAACP and a former educator whose committee guides educational policy for the Association.

“The NAACP’s resolution is not inspired by ideological opposition to charter schools but by our historical support of public schools — as well as today’s data and the present experience of NAACP branches in nearly every school district in the nation,” said Cornell William Brooks,

President of the NAACP. “Our NAACP members, who as citizen advocates, not professional lobbyists, are those who attend school board meetings, engage with state legislatures and support both parents and teachers.”

“The vote taken by the NAACP is a declaratory statement by this Association that the proliferation of charter schools should be halted as we address the concerns raised in our resolution,” said Chairman Brock.

I • BUFFALO TEACHERS SECURE CONTRACT

there was no time to study and consider the changes so as to be in a position to discuss and vote on an informed basis. Given the School Board had voted that day to approve the contract, there was also no necessity to immediately vote on it. As well, when the contract was put before the membership, less time was provided for questions even though far more people were participating. Ensuring all questions were answered and views heard is a better means to reach conclusions.

Many are now considering ways to ensure that more time, perhaps three days from end of negotiations, and at least one informational meeting, are provided before a contract vote, so members can be informed and carry out their responsibility to decide. As one teacher put it, the negotiators did their job, and members needed to be in a position to do theirs, which is to collectively discuss and debate based on having information and time to think and share views.

Another main concern was the need for smaller class sizes, something of concern to parents and students as well. The contract did not include specific requirements to meet smaller class sizes for all grades. Instead, the district proposal to form a committee that includes teachers and district officials to consider the issue of class size is included. Recommendations are to be made to the Board of Education by October 2017. Teachers are concerned that the repeated promises about lowering class sizes, an important requirement to improve learning conditions, will not be implemented and the Committee will serve to further delay actually getting smaller classes. There will also be a similar committee of teachers and administrators formed to make recommendations to improve athletic programs.

The issue of steps was also discussed. Buffalo teachers have 27 steps to reach top salary, with steps generally reflecting years worked and also the respect gained from becoming an experienced teacher. Many teachers lost steps during the wage freeze imposed by the Control Board

from 2004-2007 as step increases were also frozen. As well there were “double steps” where senior teachers would go up a step but get no increase in salary for two years. These last were eliminated in the new contract, but the steps lost during the wage freeze were not recovered. This in effect creates a two-tier salary structure, with those impacted by the wage freeze, about one third of the workforce, now permanently behind.

The contract did provide a set bonus to in part compensate for wages lost. These ranged from \$2000 for teachers at steps 1-9 to \$9,000 for those at 27+. This in no way made up for the wages lost during the three-year freeze, and the impact this has on life-long earnings and pensions.

The new contract provides for a 10% salary increase retroactive to September 2016, and 2% for 2017 and 2018. Taken together over the entire time period since the last contract this amounts to about a 1% increase, which is less than inflation has been.

Another concern was healthcare coverage. Both current teachers and retirees will have to pay more for healthcare, reaching \$600/individual and \$1500/family annually by 2018. For those retiring after July 1, 2017 rates will be \$600 individual and \$1350 family annually and by July 1, 2018 it increases to \$650/individual and \$1500 family.

In addition the school day and year will be extended, beginning the 2018-19 school year. Start time will be no earlier



than 7:50am and end time no later than 4:05pm. Additional changes could be demanded, on a school-by-school basis, if faculty at the school vote to approve them. The school day will be extended by 25 minutes at the end of the day, and the school year by three days, to 188. Two days are for professional development and one day for teachers to set-up their classrooms at the start of the year.

A main concern raised was that there was no set content given for the extra 25 minutes. Teachers think using it for planning time would be most useful, but the contract, at least as given in the summary, does not include specific language.

Other concerns were those involving what was absent from the contract but needed to be included, such as a cap on charter schools, requirements to implement the restorative justice practices so as to limit suspensions and keep students in school, and blocking attacks from receivership. These are issues teachers, parents and students are all thinking about as organizing continues to raise the quality of Buffalo public schools by defending the equal right to education for all.

I • STRENGTHEN ORGANIZING WORK

main forms of attack taking place. There is almost complete silence on the matter at this time, even though 15 Buffalo Schools are in receivership and under state control, not that of the School Board or Buffalo parents, teachers, parents and students. As well, all 15 could be turned over to private, outside receivers at the end of the school year in June 2017. In this manner private charter schools that are not accountable to the public, could be given school buildings and provided with public funds. Receivership is a mechanism for privatization and for dismantling the district as a district. The decision for such action belongs entirely to the New York State Commissioner of Education, who is appointed, not elected.

It is also the case that powers secured by Superintendent Cash in separate agreements for receivership schools could well be utilized in the coming year. These include powers for involuntary transfers, removal of principals and teachers, and more.

Receivership is a means to remove any public control over the public schools while concentrating power in the hands of the unelected Commissioner and her unelected receivers. It remains a major front of struggle in the year ahead. It is one that requires independent organizing efforts, alongside the legal efforts done by the union.

Expand and Strengthen Test Refusal

Connected with receivership is continued work to expand and strengthen the Refuse the Tests efforts. Testing of various kinds related to the state Common Core tests, such as benchmarks, are taking place now. Few parents and students know that all tests related to state testing can be refused as part of demanding curriculum and teaching that contribute to thinking, not producing drones. It is a means to put decision making in our hands.

The entire testing regime, which begins in kindergarten and intensifies through high school, is not designed to produce thinking students who can take initiative and investigate and work together to solve problems. It is designed to force all to submit and accept a regime harmful to education and the well-being of the youth. In Buffalo concretely this means stepping up efforts

to organize among students, and to reach out to clergy and churches as a broad base for additional support.

Demand End to Suspensions and Enforcement of Restorative Justice

Buffalo has a Code of Conduct that is supposed to contribute to lowering suspensions and providing a means for students and teachers alike to contend with various problems that arise on a more just and less arbitrary basis. While 2013-14 was the first year for implementation, for the most part the policies are still not being implemented. For example, the large majority of suspensions are given for vague, non-violent activity that should be handled in school. These include things like “disrespectful behavior” and “disruptions.” They are also used to punish those who speak out, suspending them for “defiance of authority.” As well, African American students are 6.5 times more likely than their white peers to get suspended while Latinos are 3.7 times more likely. And many schools continue to have levels far too high, given that alternative means are supposed to be utilized. Having students, parents and teachers working together on this issue is part of improving learning conditions. It also contributes to uniting all against efforts by officials to force students out of schools, especially minority youth, and into prison, using minor drug offenses, just as minor offenses are used for suspensions.

Block Privatization and More Charters

Concerted efforts have been made in Buffalo to expand private charter schools. The city already has one of the highest numbers of charter school per capita in the state. Various organizers have been sent in to try and split parents from teachers and encourage support for the private charters. They generally have not succeeded, as demonstrated by efforts to secure parent signatures for a suit against tenure for teachers. Not a single Buffalo parent would sign on. Parent participation at various rallies for teachers is another



indicator, as are surveys done. When asked what they liked best about their schools, parents replied, “Our teachers!”

More recently yet another paid organizer has come to Buffalo, this time for the Northeast Charter Schools Network, which covers New York and Connecticut. Efforts are continuing to push charter schools, despite the fact that they do not provide for all students, are contributing to further segregation and generally do not perform better. They are privately run and controlled, using public funds. The teacher’s contract could have included a cap on charters for the city, as has been done in Chicago, for example, but did not.

For Buffalo there is a direct connection between receivership and charter expansion, so the two need to be fought together. Buffalo is a union town and parents support our union teachers. This stand needs to be strengthened, as does the fight for public control.

It is parents, students and teachers together that need to be decision makers on matters of education. We together are the experts and we together demand education to arm our youth to change the world and secure a bright future. Receivership, the state testing regime, private charters and more criminalizing of youth using suspensions and arrests, all stand in the way. By advancing on these issues, strengthening union efforts and independent organizing, we can together defend the equal right to education for all.

THOUSANDS OF TEACHERS RALLY AT CITY HALL

Working Conditions for Teachers are Learning Conditions for Students — Improve Them Now!

On September 28 thousands of Buffalo teachers, along with parents and students demonstrated at City Hall to demand a new contract with improved working conditions for teachers (a new copntract was secured October 17, see p. 1). The area from the statue in Niagara Square clear up the steps of City Hall, including the street, was packed. The action represented the united demand of teachers and parents alike that the quality of public schools must be raised and improving teaching conditions is necessary to do so. The spirit was one of holding the street for discussion on concerns and how to achieve better conditions for teachers and students. The need for funding now to provide smaller classes, music and physical education for all — vital ways to raise the quality of education for students — were among issues discussed. So too was the length of time teachers have been waiting for a contract and that the time to sign one is now!

At the overflow School Board meeting that followed, with more than 50 people forced to remain outside the room, the superintendent made public current contract proposals. The information was presented in a manner to make it look like teachers are only concerned about themselves and more money, and already have conditions that are better than most in the county. This is not accurate and is an effort to divide parents and teachers,



which does not serve students. Anyone serious about making comparisons needs to include issues like conditions of work, such as large class sizes and insufficient resources, and the impact on pensions over the past twelve years given wage freezes and no raises. It is not a myth that Buffalo conditions are considerably worse than other districts in the county.

An effort was also made to say Buffalo teachers should accept concessions in healthcare, for current and retired teachers, because other districts have done so. This is the notion of lowering the level to the average, instead of working to raise the level to the best. Buffalo teachers have far more difficult teaching conditions than elsewhere in the county, including contending with poverty, hunger, lead poisoning, the impact of government racism and police violence and brutality in the communities, and more.

The superintendent needs to fight to provide a contract that mirrors the best in the county, not the average. And he and the whole board need to be frontline fighters for the state funding required to do that.

What kind of example is being set when the state has been mandated by the court to provide funding yet has refused to do so for ten years? \$85 million is owed, now. The law is being broken, students and teachers pay the price, and action is needed to now by the superintendent and school board to hold the state accountable.

Let the union and board together provide buses to Albany — parents, students and teachers will fill them and together demand that the \$85 million owed Buffalo by law be provided now. And that it be used, not for more testing, not for more outside consultants, but for smaller classes, music and physical education for all, and the improved working conditions teachers required to raise the quality of learning for students.



Rally Affirms: Working Conditions for Teachers are Learning Conditions for Students

