

Roll Back Prices campaign: Shoppers outraged at inflation in food, utility costs

written by Struggle - La Lucha
March 6, 2023



SLL photos

On March 4, shoppers at an Albertsons grocery store in Los Angeles were greeted with flyers calling for an end to war and inflation in a campaign by the Harriet Tubman Center for Social Justice to “Roll Back Prices.”

Physics tells us that every action gets a reaction. The \$100-billion worth of firepower going to escalate war with Russia and the countless money spent on provoking war with China is returning that energy to us here in the U.S. as a force of inflationary destruction, obliterating our already deteriorating standard of living.



Shoppers here are seeing it not only at the cash register but in their utility bills – big time.

The utility SoCalGas recently announced drastic rate hikes and is already trying to get those hikes extended through 2027 in hearings on March 6 and March 15. Most people, however, find it odd that SoCal’s parent company Sempra Energy is making record profits and just rewarded top executives with huge payouts.

The [Los Angeles Times reported](https://www.losangelestimes.com/story/news/politics/california/2021/12/21/sempra-energy-compensation-2021/7000000001/) that Sempra’s executive compensation numbers for 2021 include \$25 million for Chief Executive Jeffrey Martin. Two other execs made

\$8 million and \$7 million.

Grocery chain Kroger's 2022 profits also broke records - so much so that the company is planning on buying this store and every other Albertsons.

The Biden administration and every Democrat and Republican in Congress who voted for war escalation and devastating economic sanctions against other countries have caused supply shortages and inflation. They have also created an atmosphere providing an excuse for price-gouging.

People stopping to talk with organizers and sign up to join the Roll Back Prices campaign complained about the high cost of groceries. But their greatest complaint was the unbelievable increase in utility rates.

"My last bill was \$1,900," said one woman who grabbed a flier as she rushed into the store. This is not an isolated case. People are reporting bills that are eight times higher than last year's rates.

This is why the Roll Back Prices campaign is demanding Biden issue an executive order to stop price-gouging, inflationary spending on war against Russia and further provocations against China. The campaign is demanding that the trillion dollars spent on the U.S. war budget instead be used for vital social needs.

"Where's our bailout?" said Maggie Vascassenno, an organizer of the action. "Every working person is hurting from this war drive and inflation. And especially the workers in this store and the SoCal utility workers. They made huge profits for these companies and are getting repaid with meager checks that continue to be eaten up by inflation.

"Well, it's got to stop. It's got to stop now. We have to say, 'No more money for

inflation and war – we need a drop in utility and food prices now!’”

Further demonstrations are planned for March 15 at SoCal gas and the Public Utilities Commission hearing.



Behind California's extreme weather emergency

written by Struggle - La Lucha
March 6, 2023

March 3 — While the giant U.S. energy corporations and banks seek out every way to profit from the climate change emergency that they inflicted on the world, extreme weather events are becoming the new normal.

In the last week of February, rain, snow, and damaging winds hit the U.S. west coast, breaking historic records. Instead of reining in the energy corporations that created this crisis, the Biden administration has proven to be every bit the ally to them as every preceding president since the beginning of the 20th century.

Over the last week, people were stranded in their homes in the San Bernardino and Sierra Nevada mountain ranges. The highest elevations experienced the heaviest snowfall. Mount Baldy, east of Los Angeles, got 6.5 feet of snow. An astonishing 15 feet of snow has closed Yosemite National Park.

Thousands were without power. Homes were damaged by winds, and roof cave-ins from the weight of snow. As of this writing, the number of people who may still be stranded in their homes is unclear. But during the first two days of March, people communicated to the press that they were nearly out of food, baby formula, medicine, and gasoline for their generators.

The snowfall hindered driving so much that the Department of Transportation was forced to put plans to evacuate people on hold when roads proved to be much too hazardous even for their equipment. A section of Interstate 5 about 70 miles north of Los Angeles called the Grapevine, where 100,000 drivers travel every day, was closed.

It's not unusual for the highest elevations to be hit by snow storms. But areas all the way down to 1,500 feet above sea level are now covered with snow and look more like the Himalayas than California mountain ranges.

The Woodland Hills neighborhood in the San Fernando Valley - known for being one of the hottest and driest areas within the city limits of L.A. - got 10 inches of rain. The city of Pasadena had hail storms. Photographs appeared in major media and posted on social media of cars stuck in busy urban intersections with only the roof sticking out above flood waters. Governor Gavin Newsom has declared an emergency in 13 California counties.

Atmospheric rivers more frequent

The drought that has been plaguing the west, and was the worst in 1,200 years by

some measures, appears to have improved – reservoirs are filling up, and rivers and creeks are rising. But it would be a huge mistake to think of this event as a silver lining and diminish its significance as part of the overall disaster that the global climate change crisis represents.

Like the ongoing drought in East Africa, the floods that ravaged Pakistan, the historic wildfires in the western states of the U.S., the heatwaves that hit China, parts of Europe and the U.S. west coast in recent years, these February 2023 rain and snow storms are a very dangerous sign that extreme weather events are intensifying.

Atmospheric rivers are happening more frequently because of the rising temperature of the atmosphere and are the direct cause of California's latest weather disaster.

Atmospheric rivers are long streams of water carried over the Pacific from the warm bands of air over the Tropics toward the west coast of the U.S. They may move streams of water between 250 and 375 miles wide. The strongest atmospheric rivers can move anywhere between 7 and 25 times as much water as the flow of the Mississippi River.

Normally, they may be part of a cycle during which, after a period of dry weather, a good healthy rainstorm replenishes water supplies and helps agriculture to recover. But climate scientists are now very concerned about an increase in the frequency of weather crises when several atmospheric rivers might deluge the West Coast by happening all at once or over a short period of time. That is what walloped a huge part of California during the last week of February.

The [Jan. 3 New York Times explained](#) the growing concern on the part of climatologists that the kind of storms that hit the West Coast more than 150 years ago could happen again. The Times reported that “a pile-on of wet weather caused

catastrophic flooding across California and the Pacific Northwest in the winter of 1861-62, when deluges swept away homes and farms and turned valleys into vast lakes ... the risk of a replay of those floods is rising.”

The article cited a study that found that “nearly four out of five years between 1981 and 2019, half or more of all atmospheric rivers that affected the state were part of an atmospheric river family, or a rapid parade of storms.”

The increasing possibility of a repeat of the 1861-62 calamity is due to rising global temperatures from burning fossil fuels. Today, California is the most populous state, and a repeat of what happened 150 years ago would be far worse.

Biden's sophistry

In President Joe Biden's Feb. 7 State of the Union speech, he referred to the climate crisis as “existential,” but went on to say that “we will be stuck with fossil fuels for a long time.” This might be considered sophistry – using a bit of truth to strengthen a big deception.

Biden left out that his administration provoked the war in Ukraine, which is a devastating setback in the fight against climate change. Even before U.S. imperialism's provocations cornered Russia into war, U.S. banks and energy companies were looking for ways to take the European natural gas market from Russia.

In a recent article, investigative journalist [Seymour Hersch presented convincing evidence](#) that the sabotage of the Nord Stream pipeline, meant to carry liquid natural gas from Russia to the European market, was carried out by Washington. Now the U.S. is producing more natural gas than ever before – most of it being exported to Europe.

Biden has also greenlit auctions of Gulf of Mexico oil drilling rights and okayed more

oil drilling in Alaska.

Once they are done counting the money, U.S. oil giants Exxon and Chevron are expected to have brought in another \$100 billion in profit during 2022 due to the war that the U.S. instigated in Ukraine.

The global temperature has risen 1.1 degrees since the beginning of the capitalist industrial age. Annual United Nations-sponsored conferences have pledged to keep it from rising past a 1.5-degree increase by the year 2050.

Climatologists have come to realize that the consequences of burning fossil fuels are coming faster than anticipated. This is a global emergency. Capitalism is, in fact, the “existential” threat. The dominance of energy corporations, banks, and other mega-corporations must come to an end.



Struggle □ La Lucha PDF - March 6,

2023

written by Struggle - La Lucha

March 6, 2023

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STRUGGLE ★ **LA LUCHA**
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The East Palestine, Ohio, train wreck

Capitalist greed fuels toxic nightmare

By Stephen Millies

The profits-first safety-last Norfolk Southern railway has turned East Palestine, Ohio, into a burn pit. Like the dumps operated by the U.S. military in formerly occupied Afghanistan and still occupied Iraq, the Feb. 3 train wreck poisoned a wide area.

The deliberate ignition of five tank cars on Feb. 6 released a mushroom cloud of toxins. A temporary evacuation didn't help much. Residents are reporting health problems, including bronchitis and skin rashes, while thousands of fish have died.

"The whole sky was black," was how Darlington, Pennsylvania, resident Amanda Kemmer described conditions after the cars were blown up. Darlington is just nine miles from East Palestine.

"And then you get this chemical smell in the house," the mother of four children said. "Everyone had a headache and didn't feel well and was sick to their stomach."

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine called this disaster a "controlled release" and said he approved of it. A hole was punched into each of the tank cars so that the vinyl chloride inside could pour into a pit and be set on fire.

Used to make PVC pipe, packaging and coatings, vinyl chloride is dangerous, according to the National Cancer Institute. Exposure to it increases the risk of liver, brain and lung cancers as well as lymphoma and leukemia.

That's a reason why vinyl chloride is being phased out around the world. Germany banned dumping it in landfills in 2005. Truckloads of the burned residue are now being shipped to Indiana, Michigan and Texas.

The excuse given by both the rail-



Food stamp benefits are being reduced across the board starting March 1, with 42 million seeing cuts. Congress and President Biden cut food stamps even as food price inflation is spreading, with no sign of letup. Above, a protest in Baltimore. See page 3

SEE PHOTO: SHARON BLAKE

road and Gov. DeWine for the deliberate burning of this poison was to prevent the tank cars from exploding. Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro thinks the real reason was more about clearing the tracks quicker.

"Amtrak Joe" in the White House knows about burn pits. President Biden blames them for killing his 49-year-old son Joseph "Beau" Biden III, who died from brain cancer.

So why doesn't Biden sanction Norfolk Southern CEO Alan Shaw like he does Cuba, Syria, Venezuela, Yemen and Zimbabwe? While Shaw raked in \$4.5 million last year, the U.S. government is trying to economically strangle these countries.

Saving money, wasting lives

Eighteen years ago a Norfolk Southern train hauling chlorine and other chemicals derailed in Graniteville, South Carolina, on Jan. 6, 2005. Poisonous chlorine gas was released, killing 10 people.

The train was operating in what railroaders call "dark territory"—a track without wayside signals. Only a small switch target warned engineer Christopher Seeling too late that the track was misaligned for a

Continued on page 2



**Take Cuba off Washington's 'List
of State-Sponsors of Terrorism'
End the US Blacklist of Cuban
and All US Anti-Cuba Economic
and Travel Sanctions**

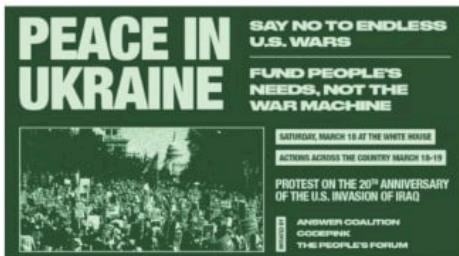
**Emergency Rally of The Historic
Madrugada - Dr. Ruy Stalder
Presider - 11:00am Central**

**210-40 Broadway - 10th Street
- Manhattan, NY**

**DOORS 10:00 / 10:30 PM
PROGRAM 11:00 - 1:30 PM**

**Sat.
Mar.
11th**

Condemn Biden – not Cuba 7



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- Condemn Biden’s report, false designation of Cuba as ‘state sponsor of terrorism’
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New York City: Rally

commemorating Hugo Chavez + Hands off Venezuela, March 5

written by Struggle - La Lucha
March 6, 2023



**Reunión en conmemoración a los 10 años de
la siembra del Líder de la Revolución
Bolivariana el Comandante Eterno**

Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías



Nosotros demandamos:

- **FUERA** las manos de los EEUU de Venezuela
- **NO** más Sanciones Criminales al Pueblo Venezolano
- **LIBERTAD** para el Diplomático venezolano secuestrado, Alex Saab

Domingo 5 de Marzo @ 4:00pm

Estatua de Simón Bolívar, Central Park W 59th & 6th Ave

Tome los trenes N/Q/R/W/F hasta 57 St.

Organizado por Troika Collective, Free Alex Saab Coalition NYC, El D19: Libre, USA-Canada y Costa Rica, PetroBronx Collective, El Frente Internacionalista de Mujeres para la Paz y Justicia, Peruan@s Antifascistas en el Exterior USA, MORENA NY, Alianza Pais RD, Defend Democracy in Brazil, NY-NJ Cuba Si Coalition, Struggle for Socialism/ La Lucha por el Socialismo, El Ministerio de Solidaridad con los Pueblos, Al-Awda NY, the Palestine Right to Return Coalition, Voices of Resistance WBAI, Friends of the ATC, International Action Center & Workers World Party

SUNDAY, MARCH 5, 2023, AT 4:00 PM EST

Rally commemorating Comandante Hugo Chávez + U.S. Hands off Venezuela + FREE Alex Saab !

Simon Bolivar Statue

Rally commemorating the leader of the Bolivarian revolution Comandante Hugo Chávez who transitioned 10 years ago on March 5, 2013

Our demands:

- * U.S. Hands OFF Venezuela!

- * NO Sanctions on the Venezuelan people!

- * FREE kidnapped Venezuelan diplomat, Alex Saab !

Sunday, March 5th @ 4:00pm

Simón Bolívar Statue, Central Park W 59th & 6th Ave

Take N/Q/R/W/F trains to 57 St.

Organized by Troika Kollektive, Free Alex Saab Coalition NYC, El D19: Libre, USA-Canada y Costa Rica, PetroBronx Collective, El Frente Internacionalista de Mujeres para la Paz y Justicia, Peruan@s Antifascistas en el Exterior USA, MORENA NY, Alianza Pais RD, Defend Democracy in Brazil, NY-NJ Cuba Si Coalition, Struggle for Socialism/ La Lucha por el Socialismo, El Ministerio de Solidaridad con los Pueblos, Al-Awda NY, the Palestine Right to Return Coalition, Voices of Resistance WBAI, Friends of the ATC, International Action Center & Workers World Party



Baltimore: Evening of Solidarity with Cuba, March 25

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March 6, 2023

Night of Solidarity with Cuba
► **Dinner Speakers & Music**

End the U.S. Blockade on Cuba

Support local activists traveling to Cuba

Saturday, March 25, 6 pm @
NoMüNoMü
Arts Collaborative
709 N. Howard St.

BALTO PPA **FRIENDS of LATIN AMERICA** **WOMEN IN STRUGGLE - MUJERES EN LUCHA** **STRUGGLE ★ LA LUCHA for Socialism | por el Socialismo**

SATURDAY, MARCH 25, 2023 AT 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM EDT
Evening of Solidarity with Cuba - Dinner, Guest Speaker & Music
NoMüNoMü, 709 N. Howard Street, Baltimore

Join us for a Night of Solidarity with Cuba including dinner, music and special guest speaker, Cuban Embassy, Second Secretary, David Ramirez Alvarez. Meet youth and community activists who will travel to Cuba.

Delicious Cuban inspired dinner: Cuban style shrimp & grits, Black beans and rice, roasted turkey & ham, desert & much more.

Tickets for dinner are \$10 to \$25. No one turned away for lack of funds. Funds raised will help with scholarships for local activists planning to go to Cuba.

Sponsored by: Peoples Power Assembly, Women In Struggle/Mujeres En Lucha (a member of the FDIM), Friends of Latin America, and Struggle-La Lucha



Ukraine war a triple-plundering of people of the U.S.

written by Struggle - La Lucha

March 6, 2023

[PressTV](#)

The majority of people of the United States, especially the working class and oppressed communities, are being “triply plundered” by the Ukraine war, American political analyst and anti-war activist Bill Does has said.

“First we have our taxes – funds that should be spent on human needs – spent on weapons. Then there is the inflation caused by printing money for the Pentagon. And then there is the price of food, energy and everything else pushed still higher by the shortages caused by war and sanctions,” the analyst explained.

Does, a writer for Struggle-La Lucha and longtime antiwar activist, made the remarks in an interview with the Press TV website Thursday while commenting on U.S. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell’s statement that U.S. aid to Ukraine is a “direct investment” in Washington’s interests.

McConnell said that U.S. national security is tied to stability and security in Europe and preventing Russian forces from advancing in the continent.

“As my fellow leading Republicans and I have explained, it is not an act of charity for the United States and our NATO allies to help supply the Ukrainian people’s self-defense,” the former Senate Majority leader said. “It is a direct investment in our own core national interests.”

McConnell pointed out that the United States has largely been sending older

weapons from its stockpile to Ukraine.

He urged the Biden administration to act more resolutely in ensuring that its military assistance to Ukraine and investments happen at the “speed of relevance.”

‘Both U.S. parties serve U.S. corporate war machine’

“Senator McConnell apparently feels the tens of billions of our tax dollars the Biden administration has poured into Ukraine is not enough. His remarks underscore how both major U.S. parties serve the corporate war machine,” said Does.

“The Republican Senate leader is not lying though when he calls that money an ‘investment.’ That is exactly how the bankers, financial managers and corporate bosses making billions off this war see it. For them, the bloodbath in Ukraine is a gold mine. That’s what McConnell means when he speaks of ‘core national interests,’” the activist explained.

He added, “Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky told the paid corporate shills in U.S. Congress the same thing when he addressed them last November: ‘Your money is not charity, it’s an investment.’”

‘An investment that won’t benefit the majority of people in the U.S.’

Does said, “It is not an investment that will benefit the majority of people of the United States, especially the working class and oppressed communities.”

“But this ‘direct investment’ is already paying off big time for U.S. and British energy monopolies, arms corporations and the banks and asset managers that control them. ‘U.S. oil producers reap \$200 billion windfall from Ukraine war price surge,’ the *Financial Times* wrote in November,” he added.

“‘ExxonMobil reached record profits amid high gas prices, war in Ukraine,’ PBS

reported in January. 'How the Ukraine war is fueling massive profits for energy firms and arms dealers,' read a February headline in the *Times* of London. The war in Ukraine rescued the U.S. energy industry from the price collapse of 2020," he said.

"BlackRock, the world's largest investment house, is already raking in war profits through its arms and energy holdings. And in December, UPI reported, 'Zelensky, BlackRock CEO agree to coordinate Ukraine rebuilding investment,'" the analyst said.

"Ukraine could be a 'beacon about the power of capitalism,' BlackRock CEO Larry Fink bragged in Davos last month."

Why is the U.S. ruling class targeting Iran, Venezuela, Russia

"This profit bonanza is not a windfall or accident," said Does. "In 1991, as the Soviet Union disintegrated, Washington embarked on a global drive to recapture control of the world's energy supply. The first target was Iraq. Libya and Syria were next, along with sanctions and covert operations against Iran and Venezuela. Russia was the ultimate target."

"These countries are very different, but they have committed a common crime in the eyes of the U.S. corporate ruling class. They have large energy reserves and they don't pay tribute to Washington and Wall Street," he explained.

"Cutting Europe off from Soviet/Russian energy supplies has been a prime U.S. objective since the 1980s, when the Reagan regime tried to sabotage the Trans-Siberian Pipeline. It was an object of the U.S.-backed 2014 coup in Kiev and eight years of U.S. military investment in Ukraine," he noted.

"It is why the U.S. encouraged the Kiev regime's bloody eight-year war against the people of Donetsk and Lugansk. Washington has pushed NATO expansion precisely to build a wall between West Europe and Russia. "

Russia began its “special military operation” in Ukraine on February 24, 2022 with a declared aim of “demilitarizing” Donbas, which is made up of the Donetsk and Luhansk self-proclaimed republics. Back in 2014, the two republics, which are predominantly Russian-speaking, broke away from Ukraine, prompting Kiev to launch a bloody war against both regions. The years-long conflict has killed more than 14,000 people, mostly in the Donbas.

Since the onset of the conflict between the two countries, the United States and its European allies have unleashed an array of unprecedented sanctions against Russia and poured numerous batches of advanced weapons into Ukraine to help its military fend off the Russian troops, despite repeated warnings by the Kremlin that such measures will only prolong the war.

The elephant in the room: The Nord Stream explosion

“On September 23 of last year, explosives planted by U.S. Navy divers blew up the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines deep in the Baltic Sea. Stopping the pipelines, which carry Russian natural gas to Germany, has been a declared objective of the Bush, Obama, Trump and Biden administrations. The revelation by acclaimed investigative journalist Seymour Hersh that the sabotage was a U.S. military operation has been suppressed in the U.S. corporate media,” said Does.

“It gives the lie to Mitch McConnell’s claim that Russia aims to ‘destabilize Europe, invading and killing at will.’ Russia has neither the need, desire or capacity to do that. For the U.S. military-financial state, however, confrontation with Russia is a means to bring Europe back under its thumb,” he noted.

“In a February 26 interview with the TV channel Rossiya 1, Vladimir Putin said that the U.S. seeks to maintain a unipolar world that revolves around its interests. He gave the example of the U.S. forcing Australia to cancel a deal to buy French submarines in favor of those made by U.S. contractors General Dynamics and

Huntington Ingalls. So much for allies,” the peace activist said.

“Indeed. Washington seeks to wreck any avenues of economic life on this planet that don’t pass through Wall Street. It sees war as the only means to restore its obsolescent position at the center of the world economy,” he observed.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Sunday that Russia is opposed to the emergence of a unipolar world that revolves around Washington’s interests.

Putin said his country is striving to create a multipolar world rather than one that is centered around the U.S.

Some of Washington’s allies also see confrontation with Russia as a unifying cause, eclipsing any differences between them and the U.S., Putin noted.



Cop City: Racist police terror

continues in Atlanta

written by Struggle - La Lucha

March 6, 2023

Almost three years ago, two Atlanta police officers executed Rayshard Brooks, an unarmed 27-year-old Black father of two, in a Wendy's parking lot. In the [immediate aftermath](#) of the shooting, the two cops were fired and charged with murder. The Atlanta Black community reclaimed the Wendy's as a community center and proposed the construction of a [Rayshard Brooks memorial](#).

Unfortunately, the Atlanta stormtroopers raided the Wendy's site in 2020 and violently cleared the community encampment there. Any plans for a memorial or community center were scrapped.

Pouring salt in the wound, racist cop Garrett Rolfe, who fired the shots that killed Brooks, was [reinstated](#) in May 2021. Just over a year later, in August 2022, Georgia prosecutors [dropped all charges](#) against Rolfe and his partner, Devin Brosnan.

This string of racist and reactionary actions taken by the Atlanta city and Georgia state governments, along with their allies in the mainstream media, continue to enact an agenda aimed at stifling anti-racist dissent and increasing surveillance of oppressed communities.

As part of this reactionary agenda, Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms announced in April 2021 a plan for a brand new [\\$90 million, 85-acre police training facility](#) on what has been a public forest for decades. Several months later, the Atlanta City Council rubber-stamped the plan.

Even in the face of severe opposition and sustained protests, the city has forged ahead with construction of what has been dubbed "Cop City."



Cold-blooded execution

On Jan. 18, 2023, the police and officials demonstrated just how far they would go to secure the site for what is really a domestic military base. In short, they would kill to do so.

That day, a Georgia State Trooper executed a [queer environmental activist of color, Manuel Esteban Paez Terán](#) (known by the nickname Tortuguita.)

Terán was involved in a two-year effort by local activists to organize forest sit-ins against the training center's construction. For Terán's dedication to anti-racism and anti-capitalism, the Atlanta police shot them 13 times.

The Georgia Bureau of Investigation has kept the facts under lock and key, making the community and Terán's family question the "official" narrative that they fired upon police first. There is no reason to believe that account.

Based on all those who knew Terán, they were a [fervent pacifist](#) dedicated to the preservation of the planet's natural wonders. Nonetheless, the GBI has depicted them as a violent lunatic aimed at murdering police. Per usual, the police narrative does not pass the smell test.

Georgia police have only [escalated their efforts](#) against the community protesting the construction of Cop City. This has included multiple raids with heavily armed officers deploying crowd dispersal weapons against all those in the forested area.

Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp took the outrageous steps of calling in the National Guard and charging several Cop City protesters with “domestic terrorism.”

As racist police escalate their war against Black and Brown communities and the broader working class, so must the struggle for liberation maintain its efforts to uncover the capitalist system for what it is: rotten and racist at every level of society.

Stand with the Cop City protestors! Down with fascist training centers!

Justice for Rayshard Brooks! Justice for Tortuguita!



Stop food stamp cuts!

written by Struggle - La Lucha
March 6, 2023

Food stamp benefits are being reduced across the board on March 1, with 42 million seeing cuts ranging from \$82 to \$328 a month per household. Seniors could see reductions from \$281 to as little as \$23 per month.

The emergency increase of food stamp benefits enacted during the COVID-19 pandemic was ended, effective March 1, by Congress and signed into law by President Biden last December.

The cuts will include the restart of eligibility determination for food stamps, Medicaid, and other social benefits, which was halted in March 2020 when the Trump administration declared that the COVID pandemic was a national emergency. Hundreds of thousands of households and individuals will be cut off every month, with millions cut by the end of the year.

The reduction in food stamps (officially called the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP) actually began on Feb. 1, when 18 states began the cuts as soon as

it was legally possible.

The numbers affected on March 1, state by state, are painful. The top 16 include: California, 2.93 million people; New York, 1.61 million; Texas, 1.34 million; Illinois, 1.06 million; Pennsylvania, 1.04 million; North Carolina, 813,000; Michigan, 705,000; Ohio, 673,000; Massachusetts, 629,000; Washington, 518,000; Virginia, 470,000; Oregon, 416,000; Alabama, 393,000; New Jersey, 388,000; Maryland, 360,000; and Wisconsin, 347,000.

Congress cut food stamps as food price inflation is spreading, with no sign of letup. Food at home prices rose by 11.3% in 2022. Eggs led the way, up 32.2%. Cereals and bakery products were up 15.6%; meats, poultry, and fish were up 8.1%; dairy was up 14%.

At a Feb. 27 protest of the food stamp cuts in Baltimore, the Peoples Power Assembly, the Matthew Henson Neighborhood Association, the Unemployed Workers Union, and others demanded that the cuts be reversed immediately and that the food stamp program be expanded due to the continuing inflation crisis.

Dr. Marvin “Doc” Cheatham, Matthew Henson Neighborhood Association and civil rights advocate, said: “The federal government must address this crisis, but local, state, and city governments can and must act too. Everyone from the mayor to the governor can and must find the resources to keep people from starving and suffering!”

The Rev. Annie Chambers, Douglas Homes housing advocate and Peoples Power Assembly organizer, declared: “They can find \$100 billion for the Ukraine war, but nothing for the people. This is an outrage! Food stamps must be extended, not cut.”

Baltimore is already hard-hit by “food deserts” (neighborhoods with little or no access to affordable, nutritious food) and what activists are calling “Baltimore food

apartheid.”

Groups have banded together in a campaign to “End Food Apartheid in Baltimore.” They are demanding that the food stamp program be expanded, including lowering requirements to allow seniors and low-wage workers more access.

The campaign has called for rolling back prices, including enacting a people’s control board that has the power to freeze and rollback prices, and enacting stiff penalties for price gougers.

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‘Our program’

Following is the program organizers announced at a news conference outside Baltimore City Hall:

“Baltimore community groups are joining together to fight for people’s right to affordable, nutritious food. If Under Armour can receive ‘opportunity zone’ status and downtown businesses can receive financial benefits, why not Baltimore’s neighborhoods?

“We believe that it is time to put an end to food apartheid in Baltimore. When we began our work, there were four areas that we identified as ‘food deserts,’ including West Baltimore, Pigtown, Oliver East, and Cherry Hill. Those boundaries have widened, and with growing inflation, most communities, with the exception of wealthy areas, are facing hardship and hunger.

“This is why we are submitting the following proposals for change. Where it is possible, we welcome government officials negotiating with existing supermarket chains to locate in these neighborhoods. But we cannot wait or rely on the goodwill of for-profit food chains. Comprehensive action is needed!

“Action is needed on a city, state, and federal level. It includes city council members, the mayor, the Baltimore Health Department, and the governor.

“Create publicly owned and subsidized markets at the previous sites of closed markets or at locations designated by the community.

- Train and hire residents from each affected area.
- Protect and guarantee union rights for all workers in subsidized supermarkets.

“Rollback food prices.

- Restore emergency allotments for food stamps to address the inflation crisis.
- Lower requirements to extend food stamp programs, especially for seniors and low-wage workers.
- Workers’ and people’s control board to roll back and freeze prices.
- Enact penalties for price gougers.

“Support and fund Black owned food-coops, gardens, and farms.

“Community control of vacant city lots for people’s gardens.

“Immediately enact transportation and food distribution plan for seniors, youth, disabled and poor residents.

- Weekly bus routes to supermarkets from affected communities.
- Delivery of food to those in need and emergency preparation.

“Community control of redevelopment.

- Form Community Action Committees in each area.
- Citywide Commission made up of representatives from affected communities to determine action.

“Mayor and City Council to call for national aid – over \$100 billion has already been spent on the U.S./NATO proxy war on Russia. Time to feed the people, not the Pentagon.”



The East Palestine, Ohio, burn pit: How many cancers will train wreck cause?

written by Struggle - La Lucha
March 6, 2023

The profits-first safety-last Norfolk Southern railway has turned East Palestine, Ohio,

into a burn pit. Like the dumps operated by the U.S. military in formerly occupied Afghanistan and still occupied Iraq, the Feb. 3 train wreck poisoned a wide area.

The deliberate ignition of five tank cars on Feb. 6 released a mushroom cloud of toxins. A temporary evacuation didn't help much. Residents are reporting health problems, including bronchitis and skin rashes, while thousands of fish have died.

"The whole sky was black," was how Darlington, Pennsylvania, resident Amanda Kemmer described conditions after the cars were blown up. Darlington is just nine miles from East Palestine.

"And then you get this chemical smell in the house," [the mother of four children said](#). "Everyone had a headache and didn't feel well and was sick to their stomach."

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine called this disaster a "controlled release" and said he approved of it. A hole was punched into each of the tank cars so that the vinyl chloride inside could pour into a pit and be set on fire.

Used to make PVC pipe, packaging, and coatings, vinyl chloride is dangerous, according to the National Cancer Institute. Exposure to it [increases the risk](#) of liver, brain, and lung cancers as well as lymphoma and leukemia.

That's a reason why vinyl chloride is being phased out around the world. [Germany banned dumping](#) it in landfills in 2005. Truckloads of the burned residue are now being shipped to Indiana, Michigan, and Texas.

The excuse given by both the railroad and Gov. DeWine for the deliberate burning of this poison was to prevent the tank cars from exploding. [Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro](#) thinks the real reason was more about clearing the tracks quicker.

"Amtrak Joe" in the White House knows about burn pits. [President Biden blames them](#) for killing his 49-year-old son Joseph "Beau" Biden III, who died from brain

cancer.

So why doesn't Biden sanction Norfolk Southern CEO Alan Shaw like he does Cuba, Syria, Venezuela, Yemen and Zimbabwe? While Shaw raked in \$4.5 million last year, the U.S. government is trying to economically strangle these countries.

Saving money, wasting lives

Eighteen years ago, a Norfolk Southern train hauling chlorine and other chemicals derailed in Graniteville, South Carolina, on Jan. 6, 2005. Poisonous chlorine gas was released, killing 10 people.

The train was operating in what railroaders call "dark territory"—a track without wayside signals. Only a small switch target warned engineer Christopher Seeling too late that the track was misaligned for a factory siding.

Signals save lives, but profits come first to the railroad brass. Greed cost 28-year-old Brother Seeling, who was secretary-treasurer of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen Division 85 – Teamsters, his life.

Last year Norfolk Southern reported profits of \$3.27 billion. The outfit has gotten rid of 12,000 workers since 2015 – 40% of its workforce.

The corporate model called Precision Scheduled Railroading is responsible for these cutbacks. PSR calls for longer trains with fewer workers.

The train that poisoned East Palestine was 150 cars long. Fortunately, there were three railroaders in the lead locomotive: an engineer, conductor and a conductor trainee. They were able to cut off the locomotives from the burning train.

The railroad monopolies want to operate with just a one-person crew. Forty-seven people were killed when a runaway train with 72 oil tank cars crashed in Lac-

Mégantic, Quebec, Canada, on July 6, 2013. There was just one engineer on it, who had been instructed to leave the train.

Last year U.S. railroads reported 1,049 derailments. That's about three per day.

That's almost the same number of people killed by police last year. Of the derailments, 355 of them [involved hazardous materials](#).

Gambling with safety

The train wreck in Ohio was caused by an overheated bearing on one of the train axles. Wayside defect detectors are supposed to catch a failure before a tragedy occurs. But there's no government standard for how high the temperature has to be before the crew is alerted.

Around 30 miles before the train reached East Palestine, a detector showed the bearing was 103 degrees Fahrenheit above the surrounding temperature. A surveillance camera captured flames coming from underneath the car.

Norfolk Southern, however, set the detectors so they wouldn't report a problem until a bearing reached at least 170 degrees above air temperature. This was gambling a train could stop in time.

By the time the train reached the next detector near East Palestine, the bearing was 253 degrees above air temperature. The train crew was finally alerted, but it was [too late to prevent the wreck](#), even though the engineer and other employees were blameless.

Why was the alarm set at such a high temperature? With the super long trains demanded by Precision Scheduled Railroading, the conductor might have to walk back a mile or more over stone ballast to check a car.

That is if there wasn't a bridge or some other obstacle. Cutting off freight 100 cars back and then pushing the car with a "hot box" into a siding that might be miles away would cause delays.

An example of railroad management's recklessness is cutting the number of workers that specialized in checking the defect detectors. According to Christopher Hand, director of research at the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen, as recently as three years ago, there were five members of the union, called "electronic leaders," assigned to inspect Norfolk Southern's wayside detectors in parts of Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. [Now there are none.](#)

The obvious solution is to run shorter trains and keep more employees on the payroll. But that means less profits for Wells Fargo and the hedge funds that are Norfolk Southern's biggest stockholders.

Right-wing clown show

Bringing a pallet of bottled water with his name on the label, Donald Trump has visited East Palestine. So did that well-known public health expert Rudy Giuliani.

When he was New York City's mayor in 1995, [Giuliani sought to sell](#) three public hospitals and get rid of 1,000 hospital beds.

Why should anybody think these two racist clowns care about poor and working people in East Palestine?

Tucker Carlson on Fox News is claiming that people in East Palestine are being ignored because they are overwhelmingly white. That's what a fascist demagogue sounds like.

Where were Trump and Fox News when the water systems in Jackson, Mississippi, and Flint, Michigan, failed? Both cities have Black majorities. Black people were

mocked as they were drowning in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina.

Tucker Carlson attacks defunding killer cops, but he says nothing about the defunding of the Federal Railroad Administration and its safety inspectors.

The genuine anger at Norfolk Southern management has helped force it to discuss giving sick days to 3,000 track workers. They're members of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, part of the Teamsters union.

[Talks with other railroad unions](#) will follow. Last year the railroad outfits refused to budge on this issue.

Nobody should be fooled by pseudo-populist attacks on rail companies by right-wingers. The railroad monopolies are envied by other capitalists for their above-average profits.

By slashing jobs, Precision Scheduled Railroading delayed service to many shippers. Even containers from West Coast ports were embargoed for a time.

Norfolk Southern has its own defenders in the media. One of the CNN talking heads is [David Urban, a Norfolk Southern lobbyist](#).

The real answer to the East Palestine disaster is a people's takeover of the railroads. They're a public utility that should be run in the interests of people, not super-profits.

The writer is a retired Amtrak worker.



Donate to help Huwarra recover and rebuild

written by Struggle - La Lucha
March 6, 2023



[Rebuild Huwarra](#)

Funds will go to help families in Huwarra recover from the injuries they suffered to their lands, properties, and health as a result of the Zionist settler and army pogrom against Huwarra, starting on Feb 26, 2023, and the Zionist attacks on the town thereafter. Though the town has been under constant attack, this latest pogrom left over 75 homes and hundreds of cars burned. Zionist colonizers also looted

businesses in Huwarra, as they were given free rein over the town, while the Zionist army imposed an order of 24-hour home confinement “curfew” on the Palestinian townspeople.

Huwarra is sandwiched between the two largest Zionist colonies and sits near the most violent zionist colony of “Yitzhar.” Huwarra is further suffocated by two major zionist torture “checkpoints” where Palestinians are routinely murdered. In between these two main “checkpoints,” the Zionist entity has maintained an unofficial “flying” checkpoint which has been manned for more than 75% of the time since 1967.

Donate to Al-Awda NY

