Recently, Tennessee Senator Bob Corker, once upon a time an avid Trump supporter, expressed his disillusionment with President Trump. His greatest concern was Trump diplomacy, which he feared could lead to World War III.

Trump’s “America First” campaign is destructive not only for the United States citizens, but also worldwide. Trump is part of a global trend of fascism/nationalism. Most of the fascists use anti-immigration as mask for racist behaviors. Also, Trump’s foreign policy actions are isolationist. They run contrary to the lessons learned from the two world wars.

At the end of WWII, there was a realization that we needed more dialog and rules of peace. The UN was formed as an advisory governing body that would provide a forum for airing disputes and a place to resolve the disputes. The UN also included a number of agencies aimed at providing guidelines for human rights and to provide aid to places in need. The UN was founded on the socialist principles of cooperation and peace. Unfortunately, the UN is not given powers of enforcement and must rely on the powers of persuasion and good will.

Along with the UN were several economic bodies (World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, what has become the World Trade Organization) that provide policies and programs for promoting economic integration of the world. Corporations with their neo-liberal policies, unfortunately, have dominated these organizations. Additionally, post-WWII witnessed the creation of regional protection agreements (for example: SEATO, NATO). These were largely a response to the Cold War, but they provide a platform for nations to communicate with each other.

Unfettered capitalism and its market-driven ideologies are opposing forces to the socialist ideals of cooperation. The recent nationalistic (and capitalistic) trends threaten the stability, as nations break from the peace-safety net created by the post-WWII institutions. When the fascist leaders want to “be tough, and talk tough”, diplomacy is set aside for militaristic rhetoric. Trump’s reckless rhetoric, as Corker observes, isolates the USA and alienates much of the world. This threatens world peace. With Trump’s isolationist policies the USA could be part of a losing alliance like the fascist governments in WWII. The USA is losing the moral authority it once commanded. We need to strengthen the socialist institutions, promote cooperation and sharing. As the military-industrial complexes of the world create weapons of greater and greater destructive capability, the next world war could be our last! DS

Puerto Rico: FEMA Incompetence

This fall has been marked by several destructive hurricanes striking the USA. The first two did a great deal of damage in Texas (Hurricane Harvey) and Florida (Hurricane Irma). Millions lost power and faced devastating floods. To the credit of the USA, citizens and the governments (federal, state, and local) provided immediate relief. Power was restored and people were fed. Trump like a good politician showed up and claimed credit for a great response. Now that the recovery has entered a less exciting stage, FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) has slowed its response, as it handles claims and problems of residents who are still trying to recover from the disaster.

Puerto Rico suffered from two hurricanes (Irma and Maria). This double whammy wiped out power for almost all the islands’ residents. Response has been slow. Puerto Rico, the larger territory has used a good guy-bad guy approach to seeking Trump’s help.

The Puerto Rican Governor has been mostly silent and appreciative of the federal assistance, while the Mayor of San Juan (the largest city) has been critical of the slow FEMA response. When visiting Texas and Florida, Trump promised to provide whatever funds are necessary to help each state recover. In Puerto Rico, Trump offers help, but says that it might bankrupt the USA Treasury. Another fact recently reported is that Puerto Rico has had only 300 workers helping restore electric power, meanwhile 5,300 workers converged on Texas. Florida had 18,000 outside workers helping restore electricity (PBS reported that the tiny Virgin Islands had 900 workers, one has to wonder is there a Trump development in the Virgin Islands).

After the initial response and the TV cameras have left, FEMA is displaying it shortcomings in Texas and Florida. In Puerto Rico FEMA has been slow to respond and seems unable to cope with the difficulties presented. If the media spotlight is off and the victims are poor people, the evidence indicates Trump does not care! DS

Words for thought

“The change we seek to make won't be accomplished by words alone.” Tiya Miles
Socialist Vanguard

Tax Reform: Beware of Trump and the Paul Ryan Bearing Gifts!

After failing to repeal the Affordable Care Act, creating other catastrophes to our environment, bringing the world to the brink of nuclear warfare, and other terrifying stuff; Trump and the GOP controlled Congress are ready to present us with tax reform. This is the moment House Speaker, fellow Wisconsinite, Paul Ryan has been lying for.

GOP supporters have been running commercials for some time promoting tax reform as helping the middle-class by simplifying the tax codes, which will encourage businesses to invest in the USA and create jobs. “Tax reform” can mean many things, but job creation is not likely to be one of them. Our tax system became complicated because the economic elites (large employers) wanted tax loopholes, credits, deductions, deferments and incentives. Tax simplification (one type of tax reform) would be nice for most of us as we could more easily fill out our tax reports, it is not going to create jobs. In fact it will cost jobs as more of us will do our own taxes. Our growing dependence on tax preparers is due to two factors, one being the increasing complexity of tax calculations, the second being on the difficulty of obtaining tax forms. Simplifying the tax codes will not encourage economic investments.

Reforming the tax codes and the tax system is more often just code names for reducing taxes for the wealthy and raising taxes for the rest of us. When income taxes were introduced, they were accompanied by a progressive system, meaning tax rates are higher for the wealthiest and less of a burden for the poorest. Our progressive tax system means that we have tax brackets for ranges of earnings.

2016 Federal Tax Brackets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tax Bracket</th>
<th>Tax Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$0.00+</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$9,325.00+</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$37,950.00+</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$91,900.00+</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$191,650.00+</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$416,700.00+</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$418,400.00+</td>
<td>39.60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A common myth is if a person earns more money, s/he takes home less money. The myth is based on a simplified misconception: a single individual earns $100,000/year, they pay $28,000 or 28% of his/her income. The reality is s/he pays 10% on the first $9,325 ($9325 plus 15% of $28,624 (the next bracket) or $4,293 plus 25% of $53,950 ($13,488 plus 28% of $8100 ($2,268) for a total of $20,982. If one earns more income, after paying taxes, one earns more money, there is no disincentive to working harder or earning more money. Generally tax deductions and credits benefit the wealthiest taxpayers.

Unless a tax credit or deduction is specifically targeted at lower income tax payers, the deduction increases the inequality of society as it takes more from the poor and gives to the rich (Reverse Robin Hood taxes). Reducing tax brackets does little to change taxes owed, but may be a way of hiding tax cuts for those with higher incomes.

Paul Ryan has been using all sorts of code words to make “tax reform” sound good, but the reality is that Trump’s and Ryan’s tax reform will be a major handout for the rich and will require cutbacks in the social safety net that benefit working people.

Zeidler Memorial Lecture

The annual Frank P. Zeidler Memorial lecture will feature Heather Ann Thompson, Ph.D. Dr. Thompson is the author of a Pulitzer Prize-winning book Blood in the Water: the Attica Prison Uprising and its Legacy, which on to 14 “Best of 2016” lists. Dr. Thompson has written extensively on the history of policing, mass incarceration, and the criminal justice system. The lecture will be followed by questions from the audience.

The lecture will be held on Monday, November 6 at 7:00 pm. The place will be the Turner Hall Ballroom, 1038 N. 4th Street, Milwaukee. Free, the public is welcome.

SP-Wisconsin Local Meeting: Saturday, October 7 at 1:30 p.m. at the Washington Park Library, 2121 N. Sherman Blvd., Milwaukee

Celebration of Charlotte Bleistein’s life

Sunday, October 29, 2017, 2 pm at Greendale Community Church, 6015 Clover Lane, Greendale, WI

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