“He’s Going To Increase Our Tolls” and Other Lies!

Last month we commented on the reckless distortion of facts and use of lies in this year’s elections. One of the biggest frauds is a claim that Democratic candidate Tony Evers will increase tolls on Wisconsin roads. The problem with this accusation is Wisconsin does not have any toll roads. Our legislators talk about imposing tolls, but have never done so. Tony Evers, unlike the current Governor Scott Walker, recognizes that Wisconsin needs to improve its infrastructure and may need to raise taxes and has said that he will consider all options to accomplish improving the infrastructure (roads, schools, parks and forests among other things).

Walker brags about lowering property taxes and keeping a lid on a number of other taxes. For example, the major source for school revenue is property taxes. Back in 2010, when Walker first became Wisconsin Governor, he pushed through a number of anti-public employee bills, which resulted in savings for municipalities and school districts. At the same time legislation was passed limiting increases in tax levies (school districts have the option of using a referendum to approve a tax increase). The result has been larger class sizes, an exodus of teachers and many fewer college students seeking degrees in education. Walker also touts freezing tuition at the public universities. While this is good, he made no made any provision for recovering revenue lost to the tuition freeze. Needless-to-say the university class sizes are increasing and many faculty are retiring, while replacements are hard to find.

One bright spot this year is what might be signs of creeping socialism. Thanks to Bernie Sanders’ call for Medicare for All and the GOP efforts to dismantle Obamacare, the call for a universal, single-payer health system is getting stronger. Opposition has developed by Koch brothers funded think-tanks that came out with a “study” that such a system would cost $32 trillion and each person would face a $100 thousand bill. Most responsible studies find that if one can eliminate the health insurance companies, health coverage would improve and save million or billions of dollars. (The USA’ system is the most expensive health care system in the world because it is poorly regulated.) Added to this disinformation is the whining that we would lose our beloved health insurers. Most, who have any familiarity with health care, would be happy to get rid of the health insurers, who employ people to find ways to deny claims.

In the race for House Speaker Paul Ryan’s congressional seat we have a factory worker with excellent union credentials, along with a number of run ins with the law, battling it out with a Paul Ryan protégé (a corporate lawyer who does not appear to have done any physical labor his whole life.) The corporate lawyer must have a record for owning new, blue collar, or plaid shirts. He tries very hard to look like a regular guy, but his perfectly clean, well-pressed shirts give him away. He is very good at standing next to a group of volunteers building or maintaining a playground. But he never is seen sweating and his “work” shirts look like they just pooped out of a box. The Democratic factory worker, wears cloths that look like they have been used a few times, sometimes he is seen sweating, and can talk with sincerity about the needs of working people. The GOP campaign accuses the Dem of being a deadbeat dad who does not pay child support. The Dem explains in one of his adds that he was $450 behind once after being laid-off from work (His ex-wife has sent out an email backing his claim and saying that it was repaid and that he has always been a supportive father.) Finally, we have a mother who is terrified of immigrants who she labels as killers and rapists! A REAL SCARE TACTIC!

Not to be out done is another mother, who is terrified by Tony Evers call for reducing the state’s prison population by 50%. This is part of a nation-wide movement, supported by many Republicans who realize our sentencing practices are unfair and costly. Our current prison population is about 4 times what it was in the 1980s, we can release many of our prisoners without jeopardizing public safety!

Hopefully, November 6 will end this state of deception and fear mongering! VOTE!  DS

Trump Follies: Bring Back NAFTA!

Trump proudly carried out a campaign promise, he would rewrite the North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta).

It is not all bad, but it is inappropriate for the times. Nafta has been renamed and is now the United Sates –Mexico-Canada Agreement. The change in name demonstrates Trump’s disregard for cooperation. Under Nafta there was always the possibility of expansion and inclusion of other countries in North America and the Carribean. If a trade agreement works it would be nice to welcome other nations to join the efforts.

The new agreement modernizes some of Naftas language and provides a measure of fair trade in the auto industry with establishing a minimum wage and a system to achieve it. The auto industry represents the problem of Trump’s thinking in today’s world. Today’s auto is a global product.

Words for thought

“Proponents of free trade were guilty of overstating the benefits and understating the costs.” — Dani Rodrik
In October, we witnessed USA President Trump raising two issues. One, which is pictured in these two photos is a march of mostly Honduran and Guatemalan refugees walking through Guatemala and Mexico on their way to seek asylum in the USA. Estimates report a march of 7,000 people (though it looks larger). Trump has called this a serious threat to the USA as he claims the refugees consist of militant people from the mideast and violent trouble-makers from Central America. Trump has pledged to meet this invading army with force if necessary at the USA border.

Looking at the close-up pictures of the refugees, one sees mostly women and children, most escaping serious problems of poverty in their homeland, facing severe hunger and deprivation as they march toward the "promised-land", the USA.

During the same week Trump announced his intention to pull out of a 30 year-old nuclear treaty with Russia that limits the number of nukes. Trump’s justification is that Russia has been violating the agreement and the USA can’t. Russian leader Vladimir Putin has been calling for a renegotiation of the treaty with the hopes of further reducing the world’s nuclear arsenal. The Vanguard does not have the capability to determine which claims are true. However, it is a shame that Trump could not call for renegotiating the treaty or trying to impose sanctions on Russia for violating the treaty. It is tragic that there have been few serious efforts to carry forward what Reagan and Gorbachev began in 1987. Neither of the Bush administrations or the two Democratic administrations (Clinton’s and Obama’s) made reducing the world’s nuclear arsenal a priority. Furthermore, one must question Trump’s diagnosis of danger. A well placed nuclear missile or warhead could kill millions of people, wiping out cities the size of Chicago, San Francisco, Dallas, Phoenix or many other large densely populated cities.

At a time when there appears to be a labor shortage in the USA, Trump sees great danger presented by large numbers of mothers and children. Apparently the proliferation of the most dangerous weapons ever invented poses a minimal risk.

Don’t you feel safer with Trump making the USA “great again”? DS

Bring Back NAFTA! (Continued from front page)

The new agreement treats them like the arer products of one nation or at least the three nations. While it provides a mechanism for raising workers’ wages and, on paper, should benefit US auto workers, the reality is car production will probably shift further to Europe and Asia as cars produced in the countries covered by the agreement will increase in price compared to those produced elsewhere. Like most of Trump’s policies, putting America first is bad policy, we live in a global world and we need global solutions! DS