



Speak Out Now

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The Debt Deal: A Two-Party Attack on Working People

There was so much talk in the media about the so-called “debt ceiling” for months. Enormous threats were made about the disasters that would come if the U.S. defaulted on its debt. What really happened?

For decades, each year the U.S. government has spent more money than it budgeted for, mainly due to spending on the military and handouts for banks and corporations — and not for the needs of working people. And so, when it comes time to passing a new budget, the government must agree to increase the debt limit to allow it to take on greater amounts of debt. At this point it happens so often it is simply a yearly ritual of political theater.

The government could easily begin to pay down its debts simply by increasing taxes on corporations and financial institutions or reducing the enormous spending on the military every year. But the politicians of both parties refuse to do that. Instead, they increase the amount of debt the government is

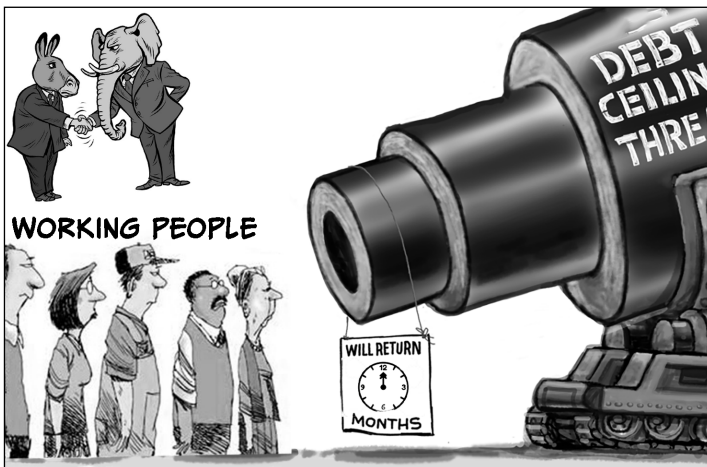
allowed to take on, while at the same time reducing its total increase by making huge cuts to social services for working people and the poor.

This latest debt ceiling deal, which was passed with overwhelming support from both Democrats and Republicans, includes about two trillion dollars in cuts to many social services over the next several years, including to child care, low-income housing, food assistance, student loan assistance, public transit, the national parks, and much more.

These cuts are expected to cut about 750,000 adults from receiving food assistance. Another \$13 billion will be cut from funding to prevent future pandemics. The deal will also end the federal pause on student loan interest accumulation that was enacted during the pandemic. The deal also makes it more difficult for millions of poor families to receive welfare assistance.

And while the bill slashes funding for working families, it increases military spending by 3%, and allows for continued handouts to weapons manufacturers to supply Ukraine and NATO with more weaponry. It also gives approval for the massive 300-mile Mountain Valley Pipeline that will rip apart rural and poor communities along its route from West Virginia to Virginia.

In the end, the ritual of the debt ceiling is just another way for Democrats and Republicans to push through the priorities of this system, which rests on the exploitation of working people.



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Dock Workers Disrupt West Coast Ports

West Coast dock workers have been working without a contract since last July. Dock workers have worked many extra hours since the pandemic, while the cost of living has continued to rise, and they are demanding higher wages. But the bosses of the Pacific Maritime Association have refused to agree to the workers' demands. In response, there have been episodic work slowdowns during the spring, and last week groups of dock workers didn't show up for shifts at the ports of Oakland, Los Angeles, and Long Beach, California. Even short-term work stoppages result in costly delays and backups, and put some pressure on the longshore companies to agree to a better deal.

Now the companies and their representatives are asking Biden to step in to impose a contract on the workers, just like he did to railroad workers last December. But organized longshore workers have a lot of power if they choose to use it.

Supreme Court Rules for the Bosses

The Supreme Court again showed its true colors and ruled 8-1 against working people. The court supported the company Glacier Northwest (a concrete company in Seattle) and ruled against a Teamsters local union. The ruling expanded the bosses' power to sue a union for damages to its property during a strike. The company sued the strikers for not delivering the cement, and claimed it damaged their property. This ruling aims to make it easier for corporations to sue unions and workers for damages when we go on strike.

The whole point of striking is to exert pressure on the bosses by withholding our labor. The point is for the company to lose money. The power workers have is that we do the work to make society run, and when we strike, we can stop things from running — no matter what the bosses and their courts say. Just like in the past, winning against the bosses is going to require breaking their rules.

We live in the wealthiest country in the world, and it is our labor that has created all of this wealth. But we aren't the ones who benefit from this. The super rich — the bosses of the big corporations and banks — keep the wealth and make all the decisions. But working people do the work that makes society run, and we can organize to unite our forces. And when we do, we have enormous power to change things and make a better world.

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West Oakland Pollution

For decades, West Oakland has been subject to extreme pollution from freeways, the Port of Oakland, and diesel trucks idling in the area. As a result, West Oakland residents, mostly Black and Brown workers and their families, visit the emergency room for asthma at rates 85% higher than the county average. Deaths from heart disease are 35% higher than the county average.

This is not an accident. In the 1940s, Oakland city planners deliberately decided to locate heavy industry and truck corridors in poor and Black areas of the city, while banning trucks from going through wealthier and predominantly white neighborhoods. The government and polluting companies don't care about working people. They only care about protecting the property and health of the wealthy.

Railroad Catastrophes

A recent train crash in India killed 275 people. India's train system is old and overcrowded, especially the local trains that working people ride every day. But train crashes aren't unique to India. The U.S. had nearly 1,000 crashes and derailments in 2022 alone. The derailment spilling toxins in Ohio last February showed how damaging even a non-fatal crash can be.

We have the technologies, human potential and know-how to make trains safer. But companies who own our transportation systems don't care about our safety. As long as trains get people to work and move valuable commodities to factories and markets, that's all that matters to the owners and their politicians.



**NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT... WE CAN THANK OUR FRIENDS
ON THE SUPREME COURT FOR HAVING OUR BACKS...**