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North Dakota oil train explosion is another harsh lesson

Reprinted from *People's World*

By Blake Deppe

In what was a devastating end to 2013, on Dec. 30, just a mile outside Casselton, N.D., a train carrying oil collided with another train, producing a series of explosions that left 10 cars ablaze. The disaster sent fireballs hurtling into the sky, black smoke that could be seen for 15 miles, and prompted the evacuation of nearby residents. Those evacuees have since been cleared to re-enter their homes, but the aftermath of the event has rung in the new year with a harsh lesson about the consequences of oil transportation.

North Dakota is home to a massive oil boom, and it is therefore that much more



A fireball goes up at the site of the oil train crash near Casselton, N.D. Bruce Crummy/AP

sobering that such havoc occurred there, of all places. Simultaneously, there has been an uptick in oil shipment via rail, which has been touted by corporations as a "safer alternative." Their stance on this matter has, absurdly enough, remained the same even after the recent string of train derailments and explosions throughout North America, including in the Quebec town of Lac-Megantec, and in the Alberta town of Gainford. Meanwhile, pipelines are, of course, no safer, as the burst-

ing of a Koch Brothers-owned pipeline in Texas proved in November.

It is also troubling to know that in Canada, where much rail-bound oil goes, the agency responsible for safeguarding train transport is operating with a reduced budget. During 2013, the country's transportation regulator, Transport Canada, had its funding cut by almost 30 percent, down to \$1.5 billion.

According to officials, in the case of the explosion near Casselton, that town's residents apparently dodged a much worse disaster. "We could have had this go in so many different ways," said Sheriff Paul Laney of Cass County, which includes Casselton. "If that thing happened a half mile into town, we'd be having a very, very different discussion here today." That doesn't leave much to the imagination; one could simply look to the Lac-Megantec disaster, which left 47 dead, to see what the horrific alternative could have been.

Grist writer John Upton, meanwhile, noted that people ought to reject comparisons between train and pipeline oil delivery, noting that the fossil fuel is innately dangerous, no matter how it is transported. "The comparison obfuscates an obvious reality," he said, which is that "the oil can't be moved safely at all. After a string of pipeline and rail accidents in recent years, it's clear that letting the energy industry move incendiary bulk fluids around the continent is like tossing a book of matches into the crib to keep little Johnny happy while his folks stare at the television. And that's without even considering the climate impacts of the ...

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Boeing continues to play one state off against another

Reprinted via *People's World*, from PAI union news service

SEATTLE (PAI) — Members of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) in the Pacific Northwest are voting today on an 8-year contract extension offer from Boeing that many are unhappy with.

Boeing is in a strong position with its offer after having taken advantage of corporate ability to play one state or locality off against the other. After much maneuvering by the company 22 states have told the company that they want it to locate work now done by Washington State workers in their states. Most have offered tax breaks and other enticements to lure Boeing into their states.

Despite this, IAM President Thomas Buffenbarger has told his members that two days of bargaining in mid-December between the union and the company produced a new offer with "amended terms and additional money," compared to the company offer the workers rejected in November.

Avoiding a full-throated endorsement, Buffenbarger asked the 31,000 workers the extension would impact "to give it your fullest consideration." If members approve the extension, the new IAM-Boeing pact would end in 2024.

Buffenbarger warned that Boeing would indeed move production of its new 777X passenger jetliner out of the Pacific Northwest, costing thousands of ...

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Arizona communists join Freedom Road Socialist Organization

Reprinted from *Fight Back! News*

By Tom Burke

from a well-read high school student up to a comrade in his late seventies with lifelong experience in the Communist Party-USA. They include students, workers and educators from a variety of backgrounds and experiences, united in struggle for immigrant rights, workers and unions, and against U.S. wars and oppression. Rings of other activists and revolutionaries are now discussing this bold move by the Arizona communists.

The decision to leave the Communist Party and join the FRSO was not taken lightly. It was serious and deliberate. As Jafe Arnolowski said, "We discussed the problems we were facing and three things stood out. One, the social-democratic leadership of the Communist Party has rejected Marxism-Leninism and the historical experiences of socialism at a time when the socialist vision is especially necessary. Two, the Communist Party's program and line misleads the working class with illusions about the Democratic Party, while putting socialism on the back burner for some future 'stage.' And three, under the social-democratic line, party discipline and organization have deteriorated, accountability and criticism/self-criticism have collapsed and bureaucratic formalities are the norm."

The Arizona grouping felt the Communist Party leadership was dismantling everything of value and drifting away from revolutionary politics. Many were especially upset with the dumping of the print edition of the newspaper that existed for generations. So the Arizona comrades debated their options and contacted a local FRSO member. It was suggested they study the FRSO documents at www.frso.org and share their views. Approached by other revolutionary groups, the Arizona group collectively joined the FRSO because it embodies the best traditions of the communist

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... well-paying union jobs. And Boeing promised to keep 737X production in the Pacific Northwest and to move jobs there from Wichita, Kansas.

"Some may believe this is a 'fake' play by the company. Your union, based upon information that indicates otherwise, must take the threat seriously. Given the legalities ... and the fact that several states have tendered serious offers and incentive packages to the company, the timeline for the Puget Sound area is expiring," his letter warned.

Workers, of course, are well aware of offers to Boeing that have come in from around the country.

Missouri lawmakers, for example, have approved a \$3.5 billion tax incentive package to lure

TUCSON — A significant grouping of

communists recently joined the Freedom Road Socialist Organization (FRSO).

Centered in Tucson, the group ranges

movement in the U.S.

Speaking for the group of Arizona communists as a whole, Arnolowski

described their reasons for joining the FRSO: "The FRSO has a dynamic program for revolution in the U.S. which applies the principles of Marxism-Leninism to the concrete national and class struggles and conditions at hand. As well, the FRSO makes use of the mass-line approach to leadership, expanding the political presence of the FRSO in the movements in which it works. The FRSO's organizational norms and practices uphold the principles of democratic centralism and effective Leninist organization."

Arnolowski emphasized, "Also, I would add, the FRSO is committed to building cooperation and alliances among other Marxist-Leninists, on the road to constructing a new communist party."

The FRSO sent leaders to meet, discuss and answer questions, both practical and ideological. Cadres also shared our assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the FRSO as it expands to new cities and grows in all regions of the country. Despite facing ongoing U.S. government repression, the FRSO is vibrant and making strides in its party building efforts. The FRSO is growing younger and wiser, while strengthening its internal structures and democratic functioning, and all the while increasing its capacity to lead struggles regionally and nationally.

The new Arizona district organizer summed up their big move: "We want to be a part of an organization that isn't waiting for revolution and socialism. We want to be working with a group who are organizing for revolution and socialism right now through their principled practical work with the masses. We learned through struggle that the Communist Party could not provide us, or the masses, with such an organization and that FRSO has the elements to lead and unite working and oppressed peoples to fight back. We need a new communist party to lead us through revolution and build socialism. We have a world to win!"

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... fossil fuel-mining binge."

As for the cause of the crash near Casselton, it is still being investigated. Though the oil train was equipped with a black box and forward-facing video cameras, officials with the National Transportation Safety Board are not so sure those will be in good enough condition to analyze.

Wayde Schafer, a spokesman for the Sierra Club, had previously predicted more of these disasters would occur as corporate support for oil-by-train transportation increased. "As if we needed another wake-up call after Quebec," he said, "here's another wake-up call."

Artist's concept of the 777-9X provided by The Boeing Co. from the new family of 777X jetliners. AP (right)

Puget Sound community." He thanked "a large number" of Machinists for their comments, and added another reason for the vote: To have IAM members, not federal courts or the National Labor Relations Board, order a new round of balloting. So Buffenbarger ordered the new vote in a Dec. 20 telephone call to IAM District Lodge 751 President Tom Wroblewski.

In November, IAM's Boeing workers voted down the 8-year contract extension by a 2-to-1 margin. Pensions were the big issue, Wroblewski said then. And company-provided charts showed workers' health insurance premiums would double in 2016.

"The democratic process worked and our members made the decision to not accept the company's proposal," by a 2-to-1 ratio, Wroblewski said then. "We preserved something sacred by rejecting the Boeing proposal. We've held on to our pensions and that's big. When financial planners are talking about a 'retirement crisis' in America, we preserved a tool that will help our members retire with more comfort and dignity."

