

international
VIEWPOINT

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Eritrea :

Independent at last

Palestine :

The circus in Washington

1993
1993
sier :

Europe

HOLLAND

THE Netherlands has recently seen its biggest youth upsurge since protests in 1988. Students, pupils, working and unemployed youth have been taking to the streets. But a demonstration on May 8 was brutally attacked by the police.

The Dutch government, keen to meet 'Maasricht' requirements, needs to reduce its financial deficit to 3% of Gross National Product. This will involve public expenditure being cut by 8 billion guilders (\$4.4 billion). The social-democratic Finance Minister has proudly described his budget as "the toughest since World War II".

The targets for these cuts are predictable:

- Youth under 21 will no longer receive any unemployment benefit.
- Youth will be robbed of subsidies for housing but rents will actually be on the rise.
- 50 Million guilders will be taken from public transport.
- Personal contributions to health care will be introduced.
- Public sector wages are to be frozen.

The May 8 demonstration in The Hague, demanding the withdrawal of the cuts programme, mobilised 35,000 youth. Eyewitness accounts claim that the police were looking for any kind of provocation.

Near the Parliament building the police split the demonstration in two. One half, isolated and with no way of escape, were attacked; 250 injured and 38 arrested.

The youth are seen as an easy scapegoat but these developments spell disaster for the whole of Dutch society. Even though all youth organisations have suffered setbacks in recent years protests are set to continue till September 21, when the government presents the definitive version of its cuts package.

New demonstrations and occupations are being prepared by students. Public sector strikes are currently in progress. And a nationwide strike of school youth has been announced for June 10. The latter is the initiative of Rebel, a youth organisation in solidarity with the Fourth International, in collaboration with the National Action Committee for Scholars.

— Barend de Voogd ★



USA

MORE than one thousand union activists participated in the seventh Labor Notes conference, held in Detroit, Michigan between April 23 and 25. Participants came from more than thirty American states and represented several local unions and a number of oppositional currents — and, in many cases, the leadership of large union federations.

Participants discussed their concrete experiences in resisting the employers' offensive and in the struggle for democratic and militant unions.

Since the last conference, in 1991, a reform-minded current won the national leadership of the Teamsters — one and a half million members strong — against the corrupt and decaying bureaucracy in power since the 1940s. The rank-and-file Teamsters for a Democratic Union tendency, which supported the new leadership team, continues its work to build a renewed union.

Continental and international workers' solidarity against the North American Free Trade Agreement was given the place of honour in several workshops and plenary sessions — with the participation of some one hundred unionists from English-Canada and Québec and about a dozen from Mexico. Others came from Japan, Brazil, Germany, France, Sweden, Britain and other countries.

However, recent initiatives for working class and progressive political action stole the show. The conference opened with an electrifying speech by Bernie Sanders, who was recently re-elected to Congress on a socialist platform, as a representative of the state of Vermont with 58% of votes cast — against the Democrats and the Republicans.

There are other independent political organisational efforts underway, for example that of Labor Party Advocates, supported by the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW), and the Campaign for a New Tomorrow who ran Black union activist Ron Daniels for president in 1992. — François Moreau ★

TUNISIA

THE general secretary of the General Union of Tunisian Students (UGET), Naoufel Ziadi has been imprisoned. The government of Ben Ali has arrested him on trumped up charges of drug trafficking.

This arrest is part of a wave of repression that was unleashed more than two years ago, and has culminated in the effective establishment of a police state without precedent in the history of the country.

The arrest is a consequence of the government's irritation with the resistance it has encountered to its attempts reform the post-secondary education system — resistance from both students and the teaching staff.

Last month there was a widely-observed strike in this sector, and strikes and protests have spread across the country's universities.

After initial hesitations, the leadership of the UGET got involved in the protest wave; as a result, elections at its 21st congress sparked tremendous interest in the quickly radicalizing student population. The only way to defeat to Ben Ali's policy is by strengthening the movement in Tunisia and broadening the international campaign in solidarity with victims of repression in Tunisia.

For the moment, all pressure must be brought to bear on Tunis to demand the immediate release of Naoufel Ziadi. ★

**Socialist
OUTLOOK**

BRITAIN

THE 3rd *Socialist Outlook* Summer School will take place from Saturday, August 28 to Friday, September 3.

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