

Milei's fascistic Law of Bases nears vote in Argentine Senate as union apparatus facilitates approval

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Argentine President Javier Milei's "Law of Bases" (*Ley de Bases*, aka, the omnibus bill) is approaching a vote in the Senate. While Milei has threatened to remove the bill for a second time if legislators introduce too many changes, several media reports indicate a growing likelihood of its approval "within days."

The omnibus bill is a set of 250 neo-liberal measures aimed against the working class. The lower house, the Chamber of Deputies, approved the legislation last month.

If the Senate does approve the Law of Bases, with no changes, it will make it easier for banks, corporations, and public agencies to sack full time workers at will and replace them with contingent "gig" workers and temps, bringing back the infamous "shape-ups" of the past. New reprisals against strikers in the public sector will include the non-payment of wages, suspensions and layoffs.

The legislation would sanction the declaration of a state of emergency citing the existing economic crisis and other "emergencies," which would give the fascistic president widespread authoritarian powers to further attack the social and democratic rights of workers.

This legislation also imposes new income taxes for single workers earning yearly extremely low wages of US \$2,000 and families earning US \$2400, adjusted for inflation.

These measures are coupled with reductions in property taxes, along with measures that facilitate the privatization of public firms and deregulation of capitalist industry. Together they will ensure the immiseration of the working class, the destruction of its democratic and social rights, and a sharp increase in the gap between rich and poor.

The "center-right" Radical Civic Union (UCR), which holds the balance in the Senate, is demanding the removal of the state of emergency provisions, the halting of the privatization or elimination of a handful of state companies, institutions and funds, and the curtailment of some of the massive investments for corporations.

Even if approved with these changes, the legislation

constitutes a massive counter-revolutionary attack on public services and workers' rights. A "Regime of Incentives for Big Investments" for natural gas and mining would remain in place, turning Argentina into an economy dependent on natural resource exports.

In the six months since Milei took over as president, the collapse of Argentina's economy has accelerated; living costs have shot up relative to wages, and unemployment is on the rise, as many small and medium firms shut down, or greatly reduce their operations. The Argentine crisis is also impacting the economies of other Latin American nations.

Since the end of World War II, Argentina has gone through waves of inflationary and hyper inflationary crises combined with stagflation—growing unemployment, rising inequality—and periods of brutal military rule.

What is developing today is the worst economic crisis in 70 years, the culmination of a continuous wave of economic crises and implosions that followed the end of World War II and the overthrow in 1955 of President Juan Domingo Perón, whose integration of the trade unions into the state and other aspects of his regime were inspired by Mussolini's Italy.

Throughout this entire epoch the working class has fought, resisted, and protested, as it is resisting the Milei administration today. The most salient epochs of rebellion (1968, 1982, 2001) raised the necessity of a socialist revolution and a workers' government.

In May 1969, a protest took place involving sugar workers in Tucuman Province, followed by protest strikes in the industrial cities of Córdoba and Rosario that led to the end of Franco-like Onganía dictatorship.

The *Cordobazo* and *Rosarioazo* forced the resignation of the Onganía-Lanusse dictatorship, but without a revolutionary leadership and a program of concrete demands, the working class was diverted back toward illusions in Peronism and blocked from power. The Stalinist Communist Party, the trade unions, the pseudo-left

organizations led by Nahuel Moreno and those advocating for Castroite guerrillism all bear political responsibility for this outcome.

Three years of right-wing Peronist rule followed, including the formation of the right-wing Triple A death squads directed against radicalized workers, militant students, and the Montonero left-wing guerrilla movement (Peronist).

In 1976, the military dictatorship took over. Some 30,000 workers and students were “disappeared” (murdered) by the military. By 1980, Argentina was going through an enormous economic and debt crisis, combining mass unemployment and hyperinflation. Once more, the working class responded with revolutionary strikes and protests, particularly in the auto industry, centered in Cordoba. In 1981, the US-backed military junta went through five “presidents.”

The military, in desperate fear of more workers’ uprisings, initiated the war over the British-occupied Malvinas Islands, a military disaster that caused thousands of deaths and the end of the junta. The war was supported by the CGT and Peronism, which helped recruit volunteers for the Argentine army.

Rather than call for the dictatorship’s defeat and a policy of unity between British and Argentine workers against their own regimes, Nahuel Moreno and other Pabloite renegades of Trotskyism advanced a policy of critical support for the junta. Even following the defeat, these organizations took a passive hands-off attitude as the working class once more renewed its struggle.

Fast forward to 2001, as the native financial oligarchy was removing billions from the country to invest them in Wall Street, which bankrupted the Argentine banking system, the working class rose up and forced the resignation of President Fernando de la Rúa and four other presidents in less than two weeks. Workers occupied factories and carried out protest strikes.

Throughout this whole 32-year period (1969-2001), Argentina’s ruling class parties—the Peronists and the center-right—together with the military, presided over one inflationary crisis after another, while living standards collapsed for the working class.

The current government, led by Milei, is already facing mass working class opposition as it imposes deep austerity measures, in the interest of the ruling class, which consists of the landed oligarchy, the industrial monopolies, and the financial aristocracy.

Once again it is up to the working class to replace this government with a workers’, socialist, regime. This means breaking with those pseudo-left leaderships that create illusions in the falsely called “classist” and “pro-worker” sections of the trade union apparatus and in Peronism.

The General Workers Federation (CGT) of Argentina and the Autonomous Argentine Workers Federation (CTA-A) were among the attendees at the 112th conference of the United Nations’ International Labor Organization (ILO) which began in Geneva on June 3 and will end on June 16. On June 6, these union federations made presentations at the conference asking that the ILO members to support the struggle of Argentine workers against Milei’s “Law of Bases.”

The CGT’s and CTA’s call for support was directed not to the workers of the world, but to the governments and other union bureaucracies attending the ILO meeting to help provide a cover for betraying the struggle of Argentine workers against Milei’s bill.

True to form, on June 6, Gerardo Martínez, a CGT leader, used the podium at the ILO meeting to announce that his federation intended to carry out a “dialogue” with President Milei: “We are committed to an agenda of dialogue,” he said, offering Milei the CGT’s help in restructuring the Argentine economy and promoting growth. Ominously, he declared that “without a state, there is no nation,” a phrase full of fascist content.

The version of the omnibus bill approved by the Chamber of Deputies was already modified according to certain demands made by the CGT to secure the economic interests of the union bureaucracy, including the removal of an earlier ban on automatic dues payments to unions from non-members, called “solidarity dues.”

Prison terms of up to three years for setting up picket lines outside workplaces were also eliminated from the current version, as well as blanket bans on strikes in some “essential services” like education. These changes, however, have merely served to underpin the ability of the union bureaucracy to suppress opposition to the bill, with the CGT becoming an effective cosponsor of the bill.

As they march, protest and strike against Milei, Argentine workers require above all the building of a revolutionary party, in struggle against Peronism, the trade unions, and the pseudo-left, and in solidarity and unity with workers across the globe.



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