



Thousands rally for grocery workers

Strikers defend health care

By Scott Scheffer
Los Angeles

After four months on strike, some 70,000 members of the Food and Commercial Workers union are as strong as ever in their fight to save health benefits and wages. In Los Angeles on Jan. 31, nearly 20,000 people—union members, grocery workers, community activists and clergy members—gathered at the Great Western Forum and then marched to a nearby Vons store for a powerful rally.

A wide swath of the labor movement was represented in the march. This included dock workers, farm workers and teachers. The Teamsters brought their huge shining honking trucks. There were signs from the Service Employees with their Justice for Janitors campaign, and scores of other unions, all lining the march route from one end to the other.

One striker's sign seemed to express the sentiment of all the grocery workers: "I'm broke, but I'll never be broken!"

Flack-jacketed and helmeted private guards lined the Vons driveway, while AFL-CIO leaders at the podium laid out plans for a national support campaign, to

the workers' applause and cheers. Actions including big demonstrations and civil disobedience were promised for a dozen cities from Seattle to Baltimore. A national boycott was also promoted.

AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson called the striking and locked-out grocery workers "heroes of the labor movement." Tom Morello, a musician/activist formerly of the group Rage Against the Machine, declared, "The future of working people in this country will not be decided in a presidential primary, it will be decided in a Vons parking lot."

Food and Commercial Workers speak-

ers repeatedly expressed appreciation for all the community support they've received. Anti-war organizations, including the International ANSWER Coalition, have been active since the strike began last Oct. 11. ANSWER activists marched in a community contingent and distributed thousands of leaflets for the upcoming March 20 Global Day of Action against war and occupation.

The Community Action Project to Support Labor, a project of ANSWER, played a key role in organizing the rally. The group plans to ratchet up efforts to help win a victory in this historic battle.

□

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH



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GRAPHIC: SAHU BARRON



MEMORIAL HONORS JACKIE KIERNAN

By Brenda Sandburg
San Francisco

Workers World Party's San Francisco branch held a memorial Jan. 31 for comrade Jackie Kiernan, who died on Dec. 23 at age 86. The celebration brought together 100 people from the many phases of Jackie's life.

Jackie led a life full of revolutionary spirit spanning nine decades. Her son Mike McNeil said his mother was always fearless, speaking her mind and standing up against injustice all her life. Her grandson Brian said she was not a typical grandmother who baked cookies, but set an extraordinary example and was an inspiration in his life. Other family members, including Jackie's granddaughter Kris, traveled across the country to attend.

A longtime friend from New York City sent a message recalling Jackie's youth in San Francisco. "We did have one," she wrote ruefully. She recalled how she, Jackie and a few other young women set out on their own and that Jackie's apartment, bustling with people, had a view of Coit Tower and an upright piano in the kitchen.

Jackie's WWP comrades, the U.S./Cuba Friendship-Caravan and Elders for Survival paid tribute to her. The Rev. Lucius Walker of IFCO/Pastors for Peace sent a message praising Jackie's participation in early caravans challenging the U.S. government's blockade of Cuba. "She was a great example of courage and commitment for us all," Walker wrote. Cuban singer German Donatien sang in her honor.

Deirdre Griswold, editor of Workers World newspaper and a member of the party's secretariat, also sent a message recognizing Jackie's contribution and the importance of winning someone with her history to the party. "While we always look to winning the young, for

they are the engine of struggle for the future, we can be proud to have won someone like Jackie, whose experiences after a lifetime in the movement led her to seek out Workers World Party as a conscious choice," Griswold wrote.

Jackie was a socialist her entire adult life. She joined Workers World Party in 1992. A member of another political tendency also spoke at the memorial, saying she admired Jackie and had tried to recruit her before she joined WWP.

Keith Pavlik spoke about Jackie's dedication to distributing Workers World newspapers to newsstands in the Bay area, a task she carried out until a few weeks before her death. Gloria La Riva said Jackie's vibrancy showed that revolutionary militancy has no age boundaries. And Tahnee Stair, a 28-year-old member of Workers World, recalled one of her first conversations with Jackie. The audience laughed as Stair related that she and Jackie had gone to the same high school in Sacramento and that Jackie remembered the words to the school fight song.

"Jackie's life was an example for all the young women in our office," Stair said. "She took care of her health and said the struggle kept her healthy."

Tom Edminster of Elders for Survival recalled Jackie's trip to Nicaragua in the 1980s on a solidarity coffee-picking brigade. He said that thinking of Jackie he could hear the International. In her honor, everyone stood to salute her at the end of the memorial with the song of revolution.

"She said she wouldn't die until the revolution happens," said Alicia Jrapko, a member of the Cuba Caravan and WWP. "She did die and now the best way to honor her is to keep up the struggle until we see the revolution." □

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WW CALENDAR

CHICAGO

Thu., Feb. 19
Silencing Dissent: Political Repression and the Patriot Act. A Forum on the Future of Civil Liberties. Keynote Speaker: Michel Shehadeh, L.A. 8 defendant, National Council of Arab Americans, Free Palestine Alliance. Additional panelists: Stan Willis, National Council of Black Lawyers; Michelle Morales, Borique Human Rights Network; Emma Lozano, Pueblo Sin Fronteras; Suzanne Adely, Arab American Action Network; Emile Schepers, Chicago Committee to Defend the Bill of Rights. Sponsored by the Chicago Coalition Against War and Racism. 7:30 p.m. At Depaul Univ.-Loop Campus, Lewis Law Center#241, 25 E. Jackson(at Wabash). For info (888) 471-0874 or e-mail CCAWR@aol.com.

LOS ANGELES

Every Friday
Workers World Party weekly meetings at 7:30 p.m. Dinner at 7. At 422 S. Western. Phone (213) 500-0529 for info.

NEW YORK

Fri., Feb. 20
Black History Month forum: Socialism and the struggle for Black liberation. 7 p.m. (Dinner at 6:30) At 55 W. 17th St., 5th fl., Manhattan. For info (212) 627-2994.

SAN FRANCISCO

Sun. Feb. 22
ANSWER benefit dinner. Recognizing Those on the Front Lines of the Struggle Against War and Racism with Cynthia McKinney, Stephen Funk, Michel Shehadeh and many more special guests. Reception 5 p.m., dinner 6 p.m. To purchase tickets (415) 821-6545.

Fri., Feb. 27
Celebrate Black History Month and commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Haitian Revolution. With Pierre Labossiere, Haiti Action Committee; Glenn Nance, S.F. African-American Historical Society; Leilani Dowell, Peace & Freedom Party congressional candidate. Sponsored by International Action Center. 7 p.m. At African & African-American Arts & Culture Center, 762 Fulton St. For info (415) 821-6545.

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If you would like to know more about WWP, or to join us in these struggles, contact the branch nearest you.

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California activists demand

Stop the legal lynching of Kevin Cooper

By LeiLani Dowell
San Francisco

Hundreds protested at the California State Building in San Francisco on Feb. 3, at a media conference in conjunction with statewide actions in defense of Kevin Cooper. Cooper is scheduled to be executed by the state on Feb. 10, despite a mountain of evidence suggesting that he is not guilty of the murders he was convicted of.

The San Francisco protest was part of a statewide series of demonstrations in support of Kevin Cooper on Feb. 3. Four anti-death penalty activists were arrested that day for blocking the gates of San Quentin prison.

On Jan. 30, California's new pro-death-penalty Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger denied clemency to Kevin Cooper. After refusing to hold a hearing about the facts of the case earlier that day, Schwarzenegger said, "I can find no compelling reason to grant clemency."

On Feb. 2, Cooper's attorneys filed a state Supreme Court appeal over disputed evidence—including the fact that police



WW PHOTO: BILL HACKWELL

ignored a confession of another prisoner, whose girlfriend approached police with a pair of bloody coveralls that he came home in the morning of the murder.

The appeal also challenges the DNA testing that has been used to imply Cooper's guilt. The evidence was removed from the lab for 24 hours previously by a criminologist who had previously admitted to tampering with evidence on Cooper.

In addition, Cooper's lawyers have filed

a federal court suit over California's lethal injection procedures, stating that one of the substances used in California lethal injections—pancuronium bromide—can result in a death that is agonizing.

Speaker after speaker at the rally in San Francisco pointed out the racist and anti-poor character of the death penalty in the United States. They also stressed the state's eagerness to kill yet another Black man when it could easily conduct a quick and inexpensive test, at the very least, to resolve the issue of evidence tampering.

Cooper's case has garnered the support of many throughout California and beyond, including former death row inmate Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, Harry Belafonte, the Rev. James Lawson Jr. of the Southern Christian Leadership Council and Howard Wallace of Pride at Work, AFL-CIO.

Full-page ads have been placed in the New York Times and the San Jose Mercury News decrying the execution, signed by over 1,000 individuals, churches, unions and community organizations. Four of the jurors at Cooper's trial have asked that the execution be halted so that previously ignored evidence can be examined.

A study released in the current issue of the Santa Clara University Law Review by attorney Robert Sanger documents more than 80 deficiencies in the California death penalty system, concluding that it fails to offer even the most basic legal and procedural safeguards for those facing the death penalty. There are currently more than 625 people on death row in California, the highest number in any state.

On Feb. 9, the evening before the scheduled execution, people from across California will converge on San Quentin, where Cooper is currently imprisoned, to demand a stay of execution. For more information visit www.savekevincooper.org.

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Mumia Abu-Jamal
from death row:



CALIFORNIA KILLING: the case of Kevin Cooper

Excerpted from an article by political prisoner Abu-Jamal from death row.

A man named Kevin Cooper has been given a date to die: On Feb. 10, 2004, the state of California plans to kill him by pumping him full of poison.

Cooper, convicted back in 1984 of the slaying of three members of the Ryen clan and a visiting family friend, was also charged with stabbing an 8-year-old boy, but luckily the child survived.

Why lucky? Well, apart from the obvious reason (his sheer survival), Joshua Ryen saw who attacked him, and upon recovery told police that it was three white or Latino men who slew his family, his friend, and tried to kill him.

When young Josh saw TV news accounts of the attacks, he turned to a cop who was present, and exclaimed, when the picture of Kevin Cooper flashed across the screen, "That wasn't the guy who did it."

... out of the mouths of babes, eh?

But San Bernardino officials didn't care; what does it matter that the lone surviving victim cleared their suspect? It meant nothing. They had their man—and on the 10th of February, they wanna kill him.

Kevin Cooper, now a man of 45 years, has spent the last 19 years of his life on California's Death Row, for a series of brutal crimes—that he did not commit.

Cooper turned his cell into a school room, studying writing, politics and African American history. He has grown into a vibrant, talented and educated individual—yet California still wants to extinguish his light.

It is important to note that he is an African American man. That wasn't lost during his December 1984 trial, around which time demonstrators, calling for his death, hung a toy gorilla in effigy. Indeed, the media coverage was so hyped, the demonstrations so hostile, that the trial was moved to San Diego.

Not only was the only living eyewitness ignored; but shortly after the murders, a local woman came forward to tell police that she thought her boyfriend was involved in the grisly killings. Why? When he came home the night of the slayings, she said, he was wearing a pair of overalls, drenched in blood. The woman turned them over to the cops.

Before the day was over, the overalls were pitched into the station's dumpster. Did it matter that the man was wearing a t-shirt the color and brand of the t-shirt found in the scene—it also, bloody? No.

Did it matter that he owned a hatchet, like a weapon used in the Ryen home, and it was conveniently missing from the couple's home. No.

None of it mattered.

They wanted, and focused on, Kevin Cooper; nothing else mattered.

Police and prosecutors told jurors that a bloody shoe-print found at the scene conclusively proved Cooper's guilt. Were the jurors told that Deputy William Baird had a pair of prison shoes in his (crime) lab, which were Cooper's size? What they also didn't know was that the deputy, post-trial, was fired for stealing five pounds of heroin from the evidence locker—five pounds—both to use and to sell—to drug dealers!

Kevin Cooper is on Death Row, awaiting a date with death, based on 'investigators' such as these!

Incredible!

Welcome to the American Way of Death!

Help save—no;
HELP FREE KEVIN COOPER!

Protest against another police killing

Special to Workers World

"Whose streets? Our streets!"

This was a predominant chant heard during a community march and rally held Feb. 2 on the streets of Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn to protest the police killing of a 19-year-old African American, Timothy Stansbury Jr. On Jan. 25, as he was opening a door on the rooftop of his building, the unarmed Stansbury was shot once in the chest by a white New York City Housing Authority cop. The march took place near the apartment building where Stansbury lived. The demonstration was sponsored by December 12th Movement, Millions for Reparations and Black Men's Movement. □



WW PHOTO: PAT CHIN
Protestor expresses anger over killing of Timothy Stansbury

The verdict is in

Cirque du Soleil guilty of discrimination

Special to Workers World

On Jan. 31, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission found that the Montreal-based performance troupe Cirque du Soleil had engaged in illegal discrimination when it fired HIV-positive acrobat Matthew Cusick.

On the same day that the EEOC released its findings, Cirque responded in an Associate Press story that ran in the Los Angeles Times. "Cirque du Soleil would not restrict the type of acts in which Cusick can appear. Cirque du Soleil has offered to reinstate [Matthew Cusick] an HIV-positive gymnast.

"We are ready to welcome him back," Cirque du Soleil spokesperson Renee-Claude Menard said.

However, when reached for comment, Fred Shank, spokesperson for Cusick's legal representative, Lambda Legal Defense, said nothing could be further

from the truth. "Cirque has not contacted us or Matthew with a job offer and Cirque has not changed its discriminatory hiring policies against people with HIV," he said.

Cirque's public statements promising to end discrimination and to rehire Cusick do however reveal the power of community action. Protests have occurred in Los Angeles and San Francisco. In late January, 30 thirty activists from the lesbian gay bi trans communities, straight, disabled and HIV/AIDS communities came together to protest in front of Cirque's performance of "Varekai" in Orange County, Calif. One of the protest organizers, the International Action Center's Joe Delaplaine said: "That Cirque felt the need to release a deliberately misleading news story shows the power of taking to the streets and not relying on litigation to create change. Keep protesting until Cirque bargains in good faith. They

obviously respond to community pressure.

"Now more than ever," he said, "with working people struggling to simply keep their jobs and health care for their families, people need to protest work-place discrimination and defend all working people's right to a job."

Last July Cusick filed a complaint with the EEOC, arguing that Cirque's own doctors had given him a clean bill of health and since he presented no risk of infection to other performers or the audience, Cirque had violated the Americans with Disabilities Act. Firing him was illegal.

Lambda and Cusick thank the community for its support and are encouraging people to keep protesting. Opening nights for upcoming Cirque shows "Varekai" and "Alegria" include: Feb. 19 in St. Petersburg, Fla.; March 18 in San Diego; March 25 in Atlanta; April 29 in Phoenix; and May 6 in New York. □

Grocery workers take the struggle to CEO's home

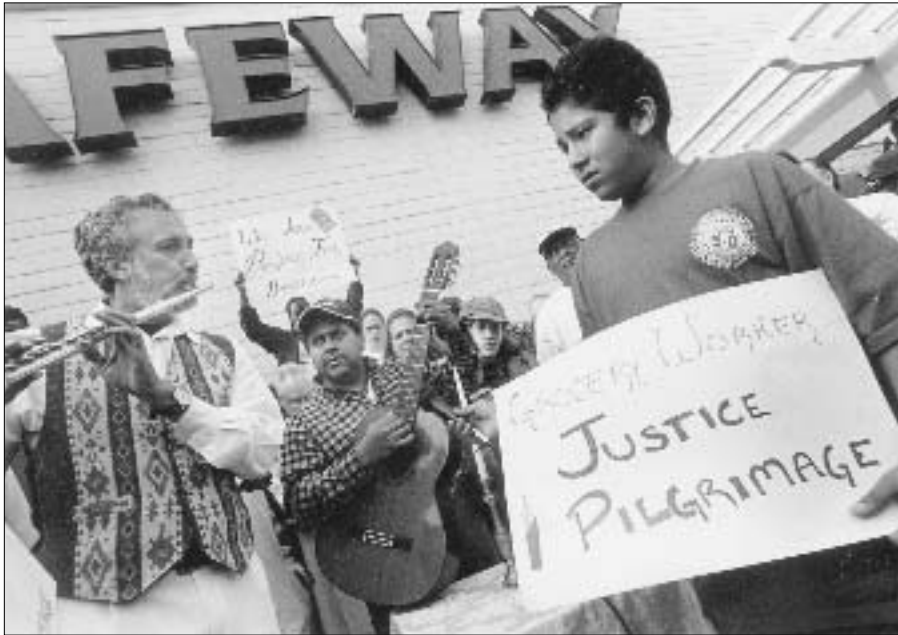
By Bill Hackwell
Alamo, Calif.

With police helicopters hovering overhead, 250 striking Southern California grocery-store workers and their families marched on the luxurious, gated Alamo home of Safeway CEO Steve Burd on Jan. 28.

The strike by 70,000 Vons, Ralphs and Albertsons workers for affordable health care has now passed its 100th day. If the giant food chain bosses get their way, health costs for these workers will rise 50 percent—putting it out of reach for many who make an average of \$20,000 a year.

The contract for Northern California grocery-store workers expires this summer. The struggle being waged in the southern part of the state will have a big impact on this contract, as well as on the entire labor movement.

The Pilgrimage for Justice brought the strikers from Southern California to Burd's home in buses and vans to deliver over 10,000 postcards urging the CEO to negotiate in good faith. Progressive clergy members from throughout California organized the march. Burd, a devout member of a conservative Chris-



tian church in Walnut Creek, donated \$80,000 to save the lives of puppies in animal shelters last year.

The marchers traveled from the Alamo Safeway to Burd's home. At the front of the march was longtime civil-rights minister the Rev. James Lawson, and the Rev. William Jarvis Johnson of Pasadena.

Art Pulaski, executive secretary-treas-

urer of the California Labor Federation, criticized police treatment of the Pilgrimage. He accused the Homeland Security section of the San Francisco Sheriff's Department of tailing strikers' vehicles when they arrived in Northern California. Pulaski said it was a waste of money to attempt to somehow link workers striking for health care with "terrorist activity." □

Made for TV—capitalist elections

By Imani Henry

It has been said that if voting in the capitalist elections really changed things, voting would become illegal.

Historically, both women and African Americans waged a struggle to win the right to vote. But the struggle for the right to vote is ongoing, especially in the South. For example, during the 2000 presidential election thousands of African Americans were blatantly shut out from the electoral arena in Florida.

The purpose of the elections is to maintain control by fostering the idea that capitalism is a democratic system that represents the needs of the people. But whether it's a Republican or Democrat, the president is merely a bureaucrat serving the interests of Wall Street and multinational corporations. None of the ills of capitalism—war, joblessness, budget cuts or racist police brutality—will be stopped from the inside of a voting booth.

Just as with any other product the ruling class wants the masses to buy, millions of dollars are poured into marketing candidates through the corporate media. The masses are then inundated with footage of these candidates surrounded by everyday people at local diners or going from cubicle to cubicle to shake hands with workers.

From the up-to-the-minute media coverage of the horror show of the 2000 presidential elections to the three-ring "Tonight Show" circus that was California's recent governor race, every attempt is made to suck the masses into this idea that the system works. Distracting the working class and oppressed communities from the daily misery of capitalism and subjugating their fight in their class interest is the goal.

Lights! Camera! Action! 2004 presidential race

Last month, the electoral media frenzy officially began. Reporters from

around the country followed the Democrats vying for delegates in first Iowa and then New Hampshire—both states whose populations are over 90 percent white.

"Voters are getting far more information from the news media than they get from the ads." (Associated Press, Feb. 2) The candidates are trying to get as much free media as they can quickly and cheaply, according to Steve Murphy, who was Dick Gerhardt's campaign manager. It is free exposure that's even more valuable to the Democrats now that the campaign for the White House has become even a worldwide event.

What is glaring is the racist white-out of the Rev. Al Sharpton's campaign in the national media. Sharpton, an African American, is the only candidate to not only demand that U.S. troops be brought home from Iraq, but he has also stated that he would officiate at same-sex marriages.

The media censor what little national coverage Sharpton does receive. Last December, the four NBC affiliates in Iowa refused to air the broadcast of him hosting the television show "Saturday Night Live." Tim Gardner, director of creative services at WHO-TV in Des Moines, Iowa, said station lawyers decided that airing the 90-minute show would trigger federal equal time requirements.

No talk of "equal time" has come up for the white candidates who have each appeared on national talk shows from Comedy Central's "The Daily Show" to NBC's "Today Show" in the last month.

Sen. John Kerry, the current Democratic candidate front runner, has his own private fortune. He plans to spend at least \$750,000 on TV ads in the upcoming period. It is estimated that the Democratic candidates have already spent a total of \$20 million on television commercials in Iowa and New Hampshire alone.

President George W. Bush is expect-

ed to raise more than \$200 million for his campaign. But when you're president, free air time is not an issue.

On Jan. 20, Bush gave his State of the Union address. In the first half of his speech he glorified the neo-colonial occupation of Iraq and called for an extension of the repressive Patriot Act. He publicly acknowledged the presence of Iraqi Governing Council head Adnan Pachachi, who was handpicked by the U.S. occupiers.

On domestic issues, the president called for continued privatizing of health care. Bush, who was responsible for the execution of 152 people as governor of Texas, also laid out plans to provide job training for newly released prisoners. Similar to his recent announcement on U.S. immigration policy, this proposal would further super-exploit ex-prisoners and benefit the prison-industrial complex. If Bush hadn't raised these two proposals, there would have been no mention of jobs in his speech.

If you flipped from channel to channel, with the exception of C-Span, you saw that this live broadcast featured identical camera angles and close-ups on audience members. Some stations had captions so you were made aware of the cast of characters.

When Bush talked about immigration, there appeared on camera Attorney General John Ashcroft. After a long tirade against gay marriage, anti-gay zealot Sen. Rick Santorum got his close-up. Tom Brady, quarterback for the New England Patriots, was shown after Bush mentioned the use of steroids in sports.

In contrast, the media downplayed the tepid applause coming from emotionless-looking soldiers in the audience, who just returned from the Middle East. To no one's surprise, Bush said nothing about the over 500 troops killed in Iraq and the thousands wounded. In demagogic style, Bush did pledge to see an end to this war and for all the troops to come home. □

Strike at NYC's Oyster Bar

Champion oyster shucker Luis Iglesias—his rate is 15 per minute—has been on strike for eight weeks, along with 71 other members of Hotel and Restaurant Employees Local 100. In early December the owners of the Oyster Bar, one of New York City's premier restaurants, demanded a cut in waiters' wages, a reduction in salaries for new dishwashers from \$8 to \$7 an hour, and elimination of health insurance for part-time workers. Management also insisted that new hires begin paying health insurance premiums of about \$1,500 a year, while current workers would continue paying nothing.

"This is economically unacceptable to each worker, and it's institutionally unacceptable to the union," said Local 100 President Bill Granfield. "The problem here is this is a very profitable restaurant, and they want to maximize what they can take out of it. They're just going too far, too fast." (New York Times, Jan. 26) Last fall a series of one-day pickets at dozens of other top New York City restaurants forced management to drop demands for workers to begin paying health premiums.

Though Oyster Bar management contends business is only down 20 percent because of the strike, fish butcher Ken Hack says he can see that the truck heading to the restaurant from the Fulton Fish Market is only carrying about half of what it did before. And customers are complaining that service is slow.

Iglesias, Hack and the other strikers are determined to hold the line until they beat back the bosses' attack.

Mich. public-sector workers organize

As state and local governments cut budgets across Michigan, public-sector employees from city halls to campus lecture halls are joining unions in record numbers to protect their pay and benefits. Workers in West Bloomfield, Royal Oak and the Waterford School District have recently organized. Southfield city workers and the unorganized employees at the University of Michigan are seriously pursuing it, as are municipal workers in Macomb County.

"People you couldn't convince to be in a union four or five years ago are listening with a different ear," said Albert Garrett, president of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 25. "The more employees begin to connect the dots, the question of being an employee at-will is a risky proposition."

Garrett noted that employers are trying to pass along higher health-care premiums to workers. "I understand the astronomical cost of health care, but to be part of the discussion, you need clear representation." (Detroit Free Press, Jan. 8)

Union membership in Michigan's public sector—including schools, municipalities and some hospitals—is higher than the national average. In 2002, 54.3 percent of these workers were organized, compared with 37.8 percent nationally, according to Current Population Survey data compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau.

...And in Wis.

Public-sector employees in Wisconsin's Dane County voted Jan. 8 to form their own union affiliated with the AFSCME. Seventy-six out of 100 workers—including accountants, computer programmers and conservation specialists in the coroner's, planning,

PICKET LINE

By Sue Davis

purchasing and parks departments—voted for the union. Social workers, clerical workers and county attorneys already have their own unions.

“The real impetus for it was when professional employees did not receive a pay raise and the pay raise was delayed for 10 months,” said Al Cooper, a former county union official who was part of the organizing drive. “It created a lot of anxiety among the unrepresented group. They want to get some assurance so unilateral decisions won’t be made where they don’t have feedback.” (Wisconsin State Journal, Jan. 9)

Home health aides unionize

New York’s biggest union of health-care workers, 1199/Service Employees, announced Jan. 25 that home health aides at Best Care Inc., one of the city’s biggest providers of home health-care services to the ill and elderly, had voted 1,227-233 to join 1199. (New York Times, Jan. 26)

D.C. parking lot workers fight takebacks

Members of Hotel and Restaurant Employees Local 27 who work at Central Parking in Washington, D.C., voted to approve a contract in early January. They successfully fought takebacks in health insurance that would have escalated workers’ costs. (Union City News, Jan. 20)

Meanwhile, workers at Penn Parking, which operates garages at Metro stations, continue their fight for justice and due process for unfairly terminated employees, affordable health insurance, a living wage, and reasonable access to restrooms.

Wal-Mart caught violating labor laws

An audit conducted by Wal-Mart in July 2000 revealed that employee records of 128 stores show extensive violations of child labor laws and state wage-and-hour regulations on break and meal times. Wal-Mart immediately petitioned various courts to seal the audit. A longtime Wal-Mart critic recently gave a copy to the New York Times, which exposed the abuses in its Jan. 13 edition.

The audit of one week’s time-clock records for roughly 25,000 employees found 1,371 instances when minors worked too late at night, worked during school hours or worked too many hours in a day. It also found 60,767 times when workers did not take breaks, and 15,705 instances of employees working through meals.

Officials at Wal-Mart, the world’s biggest retailer with 1.2 million employees in 3,500 U.S. stores, dismissed the audit as meaningless. They attributed violations to employees’ failure to punch in and out. But anyone who’s ever punched a time clock knows you don’t forget to claim time that’s coming to you.

Missed breaks and lunches are major issues in more than 40 lawsuits charging Wal-Mart with forcing employees to work without pay through lunch and rest breaks.

John Lehman, who ran several Wal-Mart stores in Kentucky until he quit in 2001 because he was “disgusted with the company’s treatment of employees,” said store managers “received no word to try harder to prevent violations.” Lehman now works for the union that is organizing Wal-Mart workers.

Cheryl LaBash and Bryan Pfeifer contributed news sources for this column.

Seeds of new crisis in ‘jobless recovery’

By Milt Neidenberg

Is a “jobless recovery” a recovery? Not for the millions of workers with no jobs, no unemployment benefits, no health care. For Wall Street and the Bush administration, it is a recovery. Profits are rising and they believe economic fundamentals are sound and solid. “Today we received news that indicates the economy is strong and getting stronger,” President George W. Bush said, following a meeting with a group of economists. “These economists are optimistic about our future and so am I.” (“Economy Remains Strong,” New York Times, Jan. 31)

There is one indisputable fact that obliterates this perspective: the recession is already here for hundreds of thousands of jobless workers and millions more who are without savings and deep in debt. Personal bankruptcies are at an all-time high. The consumer debt load for the average family tripled in just one generation, according to liberal columnist Bob Herbert. (New York Times, Nov. 10) Because consumers represent two-thirds of the Gross Domestic Product, the economy will deteriorate further.

During the stock market crash of 2000-2001, unemployment benefits were extended. The extension has expired with no renewal in sight. According to an analysis of Labor Department statistics by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, “A record-high 375,000 jobless workers will exhaust their unemployment insurance this month and an estimated 2 million will find themselves in the same predicament during the first half of the year. ... The jobless recovery has become an issue in this presidential election year...” (Washington Post, Jan. 30)

The Democratic candidates are exploiting these issues. Most are raising as a campaign issue the idea of two economies: one for the wealthy, associated with President Bush and his Wall Street cronies, and one for the middle and lower middle classes. The truth is there is only one economy, a capitalist economy that is in a crisis mode, with two classes, the workers and the bosses.

The class struggle is breaking out. It is grocery workers in Los Angeles, fighting for over three months to get a decent contract, who are showing the way, not the rhetoric of the Democratic presidential candidates. The immediate issue is winning the war against the giant Greedy Three food chains. A victory for the 70,000 members of the United Food and Commercial Workers would be a victory for all labor.

“The U.S. economy is currently in the midst of the most profound hiring shortfall of any modern-day business cycle,” says Stephen Roach, a senior analyst at the investment firm of Morgan Stanley, a global Wall Street powerhouse. Roach is one of those accused of being an alarmist by the Bush administration.

Roach and other economists have pointed to the export of service-oriented high-tech jobs to India and China, among others, as costing jobs. This is only part of the picture.

An article in the Oct. 20, 2003, Wall

Street Journal entitled “Factory Employment is Falling Worldwide” showed how industrial workers all over the world face the same problem:

“Economists at Alliance Capital Management LP in New York looked at employment trends in 20 large economies and found that from 1995 to 2002, more than 22 million jobs in the manufacturing sector were eliminated, a decline of more than 11 percent.

“Contrary to conventional U.S. beliefs, the research found that American manufacturing workers weren’t the biggest losers. The U.S. lost about 2 million manufacturing jobs in the ... period, an 11 percent drop. But Brazil had a 20 percent decline. Japan’s factory work force shed 16 percent of its jobs, while China’s was down 15 percent.”

The economists pointed out that “even as manufacturing employment declined, global industrial output rose more than 30 percent.” This is the scientific-technological revolution at work. Because it is driven by the profit demands of a world capitalist market, it is displacing workers everywhere. The quantum leap in technology has caused the mass displacement of millions of production workers on a global scale.

The job loss crisis is compounded by severe overproduction. Plants are shut down and workers are laid off. Manufacturing activity in the U.S. hovers around 75 percent of total capacity, primarily due to glutted markets. Employers are showing no interest in hiring during the “jobless recovery.” While profits are rising, they continue to cut back on labor costs: wages, health care and pensions. They have increased the tempo of production with fewer workers.

In spite of an astounding 8.2-percent growth in the economy during December, new jobs came to a minuscule 1,000, not the 250,000 that had been predicted. Close to 3 million jobs have been lost since Bush became president. Recently, Eastman Kodak announced plans to eliminate up to 19,000 more jobs worldwide.

Is the jobless recovery a recipe for a recession in the making? It is a reality that the working class and the oppressed must be prepared to resist. The rate of super-exploitation of labor, particularly among the undocumented and the nationally oppressed nationalities, is accelerating rapidly as more workers are being added to the unemployment lines. The National Urban League, a long-time, mainstream civil rights organization, released a jobs report on Jan. 29 confirming that “the African

American unemployment rate is double that of whites and that they are more likely than whites to endure long-term unemployment.”

Recovery for billionaires

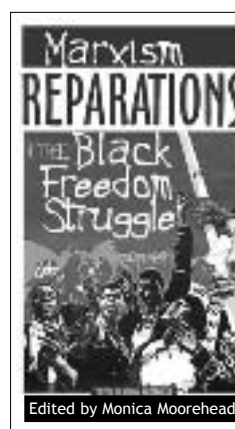
Hand in hand with the crisis of unemployment and poverty is the accumulation of wealth at the other end of the spectrum. The technological revolution has widened the gap between rich, richer and poor and is even wider among workers in the undeveloped countries. This validates the law of capitalist accumulation expounded by Karl Marx.

Recently, Forbes magazine compiled a list of America’s richest people. Their income “rose 10 percent to \$955 billion this year from 2002.” And this understates the total wealth and property of these Wall Street parasites and predators, who are protected by capitalist laws. According to Forbes senior editor Peter Newcomb, “Wealthy East Coast families such as the DuPonts and Rockefellers have been passing on their fortunes to members of younger generations.” (Associated Press, Sept. 18) The recent surge in the collective wealth accumulated by these robber barons was largely due to gains in internet stocks and is built upon a hi-tech bubble—a classic example of the rise in risky investments and hyper-speculation. These are the conditions that lead to capitalist economic collapses.

Tax laws on inheritance protect the few who control this unprecedented wealth. These coupon-clipping parasites will continue to pass on their obscene wealth through marriages and inter-marriages to the generations that follow. The private ownership of the means of production—the factories, the machinery, industrial farms, mineral wealth and so on—are social in character, built by the collective labor of the working class.

It’s payback time. A strategy for struggle is needed. Workers need a moratorium on consumer debt. Unemployed councils need to be organized that can demand a shorter work week (30 hours work for 40 hours pay) as a way to create jobs. Permanent unemployment insurance and a living minimum wage and universal health care are food for thought and implementation.

It’s a tall order. It takes a class-wide movement ready to embark on the road of independent struggle, united in principle against racism and immigrant bashing, focused on jobs, health care, housing and education, not wars abroad. □



- ◆ Racism, national oppression & the right to self-determination *Larry Holmes*
- ◆ Black labor from chattel slavery to wage slavery *Sam Marcy*
- ◆ Reparations & Black Liberation *Monica Moorehead*
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Iraqi resistance creates dilemma for U.S. ruling class

Based on a talk given by Sara Flounders at a Jan. 31 Workers World Forum on Imperialism & Self-determination in the Middle East.

The U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq is a frontal assault to seize all that the Iraqi revolution had liberated from imperialist control starting in 1958. Every Iraqi knows that the Pentagon has not brought liberation. But every current in Iraqi society is shocked at the level of chaos, brutality and racist arrogance of the U.S. occupation.

This outrage has added fuel to the resistance and cut the ground out from the thin layer of Iraqis who wanted to collaborate. It has also created enormous problems for the U.S. military machine and Bush's plans for "endless war."

On Jan. 12 the Army War College publicized a scathing report by Dr. Jeffrey Record, a visiting professor at the Air War College at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama. The report warns that the U.S. Army is "near the breaking point." The report declares that the administration is biting off more than it can chew.

Record criticizes the Bush administration for how it is handling the war on terrorism, accusing it of taking a detour into an "unnecessary" war in Iraq and pursuing an "unrealistic" quest against terrorism that may lead to new U.S. wars with states that pose no serious threat.

The most incredible thing about this report is that it compares the scale of U.S.

ambitions in the so-called war on terrorism to Adolf Hitler's overreach in World War II. "A cardinal rule of strategy is to keep your enemies to a manageable number. ... The Germans were defeated in two world wars ... because their strategic ends outran their available means."

You would think that this is a shocking comparison of George W. Bush to Adolf Hitler in WWII. In the fall of 2002 German Justice Minister Herta Daeubler-Gmelin was forced to step down for comparing Bush's tactics to Hitler's.

But the Pentagon is comfortable with Nazi war terminology. Records may have used the analogy to Hitler because he was answering Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's own comments on U.S. military strategy two years earlier.

In January 2002 Rumsfeld openly compared U.S. military strategy to Hitler's Blitzkrieg or "lightning war." He was speaking at another war college, the National Defense University—to the very officers and strategists who plan U.S. wars.

Rumsfeld was riding high after launching a high-tech war against Afghanistan, one of the poorest, least developed countries in the world. He claimed that similar lightning strikes could conquer any country attempting independent development.

Along with embracing Nazi military terminology, Rumsfeld made it clear he would also borrow the Nazi justification for using overwhelming force and preemptive strikes. Like Hitler, Rumsfeld

claimed his land was under attack.

Blitzkrieg is the term the Nazis used for their devastatingly effective war strategy. Preceded by extensive aerial bombardment of cities, German tanks and troops rolled across Europe, conquering markets, resources and territory for German capital, using enormous force to overwhelm small countries that had no defense against German military might.

Rumsfeld's use of the same belligerent word Hitler's generals used is no accidental slip. The Pentagon generals really think like Nazis when they plan for war.

Preemptive war is a theme that President George W. Bush continually reiterates. Even in this year's State of the Union Address Bush again declared, "America will never seek a permission slip."

Record's report isn't the only dissenting voice in ruling circles. One day after the publicity about the War College Report came former Secretary of the Treasury Paul O'Neill's revelation: The Bush administration planned to conquer Iraq from the moment it took office.

Arms researcher David Kay's revelations, and the "investigation" to find out what the CIA knew and didn't know about Iraq's weapons, give more evidence of questions in ruling-class circles. But it would be a mistake to think these dissenting opinions lead in the direction of peace and an end to occupation.

The struggle breaking out in the very top levels of the U.S. ruling class, among



Sara Flounders

its military brass and corporate CEOs, and flowing out into the corporate media, is over how to contain the growing resistance in Iraq.

The corporate rulers are in a terrible quandary. Even those in the ruling class who oppose Bush still want the Pentagon to succeed with the brutal colonial occupation. They want to crush the Iraqi resistance, stabilize Iraq and grab the biggest part of Iraqi oil wealth.

Report recommends: a bigger army

Dr. Jeffery Record's comparison of Bush's wars to Hitler's wars of conquest is no anti-war declaration. His report is supported by at least a section of the U.S. military establishment.

Retired Army Col. Douglas C. Lovelace Jr., director of the Strategic Studies Institute, whose web site carries Record's 56-page report, declared that "the substance of the report really, really needs to be considered."

The Army War College's commandant, Maj. Gen. David H. Huntoon Jr., also approved publication of this critique.

These are dire warnings coming from the very top Pentagon brass and their think tanks. But what are their recommendations?

The report recommends increasing the size of the Army and Marine Corps. The report is actually aimed at opening a discussion in Congress on this military expansion.

The second recommendation in this War College Report is that the United States should scale back its ambitions in Iraq, but not by leaving Iraq. Rather, the United States should be prepared to settle for a "friendly autocracy" in Iraq rather than a "genuine democracy."

It didn't start with Bush

The aggression didn't start with the Bush administration and the neoconservatives. Remember Secretary of State Madeline Albright in the Clinton administration, interviewed on the television news magazine "60 Minutes"?

She told reporter Leslie Stahl that the death of more than half a million children in Iraq from the impact of U.S. sanctions was "worth it" if it helped get rid of Saddam Hussein.

As a political representative of the capitalist ruling class, Albright was only reflecting its belief that there is no right and wrong outside of one important question: What is the rate of profit?

If a political tactic strengthens U.S. corporate rulers' strategic position and profit interests in their struggle for world domination, then the capitalists will say it's right. If it ends up in a costly, unprofitable open-ended debacle—then it's a mistake, a blunder.

Those who have to fight and die in their wars are of no concern to them whatsoever. Nor is the suffering inflicted on the

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CHICAGO, assemble at 12 noon at Michigan & Pearson (one block north of Chicago Ave.), march to Federal Plaza (Dearborn & Adams) for a 1:30 pm rally. Call: 888.471.0874 email: CCAWR@aol.com.

Anti-FTAA conference held in Havana, Cuba

By Teresa Gutierrez
Havana, Cuba

Over 1,500 people from throughout the Americas participated in the third encounter of struggle against the FTAA (Free Trade Agreement of the Americas) that took place in Havana, Cuba, Jan 27-30.

In a serious and thoughtful manner, delegates and participants discussed the current status of the U.S.-led agreement, at length and from every angle. Participants concluded that the FTAA would mean a further loss of sovereignty and lowering of the standard of living for millions of Latin Americans.

A detailed plan of action to continue the struggle against the FTAA



Fidel Castro speaks at anti-FTAA conference, Jan. 30.

was developed.

The FTAA is no longer the agreement that the imperialists originally envisioned. The many tumultuous struggles raging throughout the Americas have meant that the International Monetary

Fund, the World Bank and the multinational corporations now propose another FTAA—which some Latin Americans refer to as “FTAA lite.”

One aspect of “FTAA lite” would be bilateral agreements with one or another nation. This could mean that the oppressed nations of this continent would have to deal with the United States on their own, weakening their positions against imperialism.

More coverage to follow in future WW issues.

A draft by any other name

Stop-loss orders leave GIs feeling used

By Dustin Langley

Staff Sgt. Justin Fontaine, a generator mechanic, enlisted in the Massachusetts National Guard after graduating from high school, and served nearly nine years. Preparing to finish his deployment in Iraq, he turned in his gear and packed his bags. But like thousands of other soldiers, he won't be returning home any time soon.

On Jan. 6, the U.S. Army announced that it was extending its “stop-loss” orders covering active-duty soldiers currently deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan—thus preventing some 7,000 soldiers from either retiring or being discharged.

When young people enlist in the military, they are told that their enlistment is for a definite period of time, often four or six years, depending on the program they select. What they are not told is that the fine print of the enlistment contract allows that during a war or national emergency, “military service may be extended without my consent until six (6) months after the end of that period of war.” (DoD Form 4/1)

Most members of the military count the days until their enlistment ends. The stop loss comes as a severe blow to morale.

Chief Warrant Officer Ronald Eagle, of the West Virginia National Guard, was due to retire. Instead he is now on his way to Iraq for an additional tour of duty that may last 18 months. “I'm furious. I'm aggravated. I feel violated. I feel used,” Eagle told the Washington Post.

Since Sept. 14, 2001, the Army has announced 11 stop-loss orders, including one on Nov. 4, 2002, that affected more than 60,000 soldiers. The Dec. 29 Washington Post reported that on these soldiers' paychecks, “the expiration date of their military service is now listed sometime after 2030—the payroll computer's way of saying, ‘Who knows?’”

These stop-loss orders are an admission by the Pentagon that it does not have enough soldiers to defeat armed resistance to the colonial occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. Defense policy and program expert Charles Pena, formerly of the office of

the secretary of defense, drew a parallel between the occupation of Iraq and the British occupation of Northern Ireland and noted: “[In Northern Ireland] the British needed a ratio of 10 soldiers per 1,000 population to restore order, and at their height, it was 20 soldiers per 1,000 population.

“In terms of the occupation of Iraq, that would mean at least 240,000 troops and maybe as many as 480,000.” The United States currently has 130,000 soldiers stationed in Iraq.

The stop-loss orders are not the only signs of worries at the Pentagon. A bonus program designed to encourage re-enlistment took effect Jan. 1. The army is offering up to \$10,000 to soldiers in Iraq, Kuwait and Afghanistan if they agree to re-enlist for three years or more.

According to the Associated Press, this offer only “evoked laughter” from the soldiers. Staff Sgt. Julian Guerrero, who runs a re-enlistment program for a battalion in the 4th Infantry Division based in Tikrit, said only 10 of the battalion's 80 eligible soldiers have taken the deal so far. In Baqouba, a city 35 miles northeast of Baghdad, a specialist from the 4th Infantry Division told the Associated Press, “Man, they can't pay me enough to stay here ... there's not enough money in the world to make me stay a month longer.”

Justin Brown, also part of the 4th Infantry Division, said, “I don't want to be in the Army forever and just keep fighting wars.”

Until now the Pentagon has been able to rely on the “economic draft,” recruiting from the most oppressed communities of the U.S. population, particularly among the poor and people of color, to maintain the size of its army. Incentives have included exaggerated promises of high-tech job training and money for college. However, with simultaneous occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. military now needs more soldiers than the economic draft is able to deliver.

Recruiters have even taken to crossing the borders. According to the Dec. 23 Village Voice, “As Bush was ramping up the Iraq war last winter, Canadian military officials were startled to discover Pentagon recruiters roaming through their nation's Native popula-

tion reserves trying to persuade Inuit and others to enlist in the U.S. military.”

Last summer the Mexico City newspaper Milenio ran the headline “The U.S. Army is recruiting in Tijuana.” The Tijuana daily El Mexicano described “an intense campaign to recruit young high school students.”

This growing crisis has inevitably led to the possibility of re-introducing compulsory military service. On Sept. 23, a U.S. Defense Department web site called “Defend America” called for volunteers to serve on local draft boards.

Like the economic draft currently in place, restoring compulsory service would target the most oppressed sectors of the population.

Maricopa, Ariz., County Sheriff Joe Arpaio—who previously made headlines by putting prisoners on chain gangs and forcing them to wear striped uniforms and pink underwear—has ordered all undocumented immigrants now in jail to register for the draft. There are some 500 undocumented immigrants housed in the Phoenix-area county's jail system who have not complied with the 1980 federal law that requires all men between the ages of 18 and 26 to register for the draft regardless of their immigration status, Arpaio said.

President George W. Bush's immigration “reform” will make it easier to target currently undocumented workers, as temporary workers are also required to register for the draft.

As the quagmire in Iraq thickens and the Pentagon desperately seeks out new recruits and struggles to retain those already in uniform, discontent is growing within the ranks. Organizers with the Support Network for an Armed Forces Union—SNAFU—a group that counsels military personnel about discharges and other options, say they have seen a steady increase in mail from soldiers, many of them facing stop-loss orders. Many inquire about how to get discharged, others ask about the penalties for going AWOL: Absent Without Leave.

All of this is a sign that workers in uniform are becoming fed up with being used as cannon fodder for Bush's war for empire. □

Mumia Abu-Jamal
from death row:



Why U.S. really doesn't want Mideast democracy

“We don't seek empires. ... We're not imperialistic. We never have been.”

—Donald Rumsfeld, U.S. defense secretary, April 28, 2003 (on al-Jazeera TV)

Such statements as these must have led to deep, throaty laughter in the souks throughout the Middle East, where, in many countries, Arabs (especially their educated elite) know far more about U.S. foreign policy and history than even most Americans. Yet “Rummy” could say such things, for he knows that most Americans, having had a deficient, surface education, know very little about real American history.

Indeed, even a neocon thinker such as the Council on Foreign Relations' Max Boot had to concede it wasn't true. Said he: “The United States has been an empire since at least 1803, when Thomas Jefferson purchased the Louisiana Territory. Throughout the 19th century,” Boot adds, “what Jefferson called the ‘empire of liberty’ expanded across the continent.” He notes further, “When U.S. power stretched from ‘sea to shining sea,’ the American empire moved abroad, acquiring colonies ranging from Puerto Rico and the Philippines to Hawaii and Alaska.” (Fr. M. Boot, “Neither New Nor Nefarious: The Liberal Empire Strikes Back,” *Current History* [Nov. 2003], p. 361).

From the neocon perspective, these examples and others are illustrative of what Boot calls a ‘liberal imperialism,’ a nice, American brand, he suggests.

Yet, to the occupied, to the ruled, this distinction seems to be largely lost. Few would argue that the Iraqi Resistance is weaker today than it was seven months ago. It is strengthened by the presence of U.S. foreigners, who alienate more Iraqis daily. Nor is it sufficient for Americans to claim that this “kinder, gentler” imperialism will win over the Iraqis because it is, after all, for “democracy.” They know that it is precisely “democracy” that the U.S. Empire seeks to smother. The last thing they want is a true expression of what the populace feels, for, if it were to be, it would demand, immediately, their unconditional withdrawal.

The late Palestinian scholar Edward Said wrote recently of this:

“Every empire, however, tells itself and the world that it is unlike all other empires, that its mission is not to plunder and control but to educate and liberate. These ideas are by no means shared by the people who inhabit that empire. But that hasn't prevented the U.S. propaganda and policy apparatus from imposing its imperial perspective on Americans, whose sources of information about Arabs and Islam are woefully inadequate. (E. Said, “Blind Imperial Arrogance,” *L.A. Times*, 22 July 2003)

Said used two examples from the region to show how the U.S. used puppets to protect American economic interests, yet at the same time created leaders who became unpopular or hated figures in their home countries. First, he argued, was Egypt's Anwar Sadat, who is largely forgotten and unpopular a quarter century after his assassination. The second is the Shah of Iran, whose blind repression ushered in the Islamic Revolution and the rule of the mullahs.

To quote the late Professor Said: “That Sadat and the Shah were followed in power by rulers who are less palatable to the U.S. indicates not that the Arabs are fanatics, but that the distortions of imperialism produce further distortions, inducing extreme forms of resistance and political self-assertion. [id.]”

By what measure can we assume that Iraq will not experience a similar response?

In October 2003 the U.S. Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy in the Arab and Muslim World released a report that reflected “shocking ... hostility toward America.” That was a mere three months ago.

They know that the U.S. has aligned itself with and supported a plethora of repressive governments in the region, and that they have no intention of suddenly becoming “democratic.” They remember the electoral win by Islamicists in Algeria, and how the U.S. turned a blind eye when the post-colonial government unleashed a wave of state repression against those who had the temerity to win parliamentary elections. Algeria reflected what happens, in U.S. eyes, when there is too much democracy!

The last thing they want is a repeat! □

From Middle East war to immigrant rights

Conference offers a Marxist world view

By Deirdre Griswold
New York

Disillusioned with capitalist war, racism and deepening economic problems for workers, many people new to Marxism attended a Workers World Party conference here on Jan. 31. The event focused on the situation in the Middle East but covered many other topics within the framework of the worldwide struggle for socialism.

The conference, which had been built regionally, was a follow-up to a national meeting hosted by WWP in December that drew nearly 300 people. That one had coincided with a major blizzard in the Northeast, which kept many from the surrounding area at home. They got a second chance on Jan. 31 and more than 150 came, some driving many hours from surrounding states.

Most of the day was spent in workshops. There was ample time for questions and discussion on topics ranging from labor and the immigrant-rights movement to an analysis of "The USSR—Its Achievements & Its Collapse."

Between workshops in the morning and afternoon, the whole conference assembled in a school auditorium to hear a panel discussion on "Imperialism and Self-Determination in the Middle East."

Workers World Party, having weathered the storm of reaction and demoralization that swept much of the left movement after the collapse of the USSR, has played a central role in inspiring resistance to the Bush administration's war moves. Many people at the conference had heard of the party because of its work in the anti-war movement, and came to check out how the party's political theory has nourished its militancy and activism.

Larry Holmes opened the Middle East panel with an overview of why it's impor-



WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL



Far left, Larry Holmes speaking at Jan. 31 conference.

Left and below, Judi Cheng and Deirdre Griswold in China workshop.



WW PHOTOS: JOHN CATALINOTTO

tant to raise the struggle for socialism at this time of war and deepening economic instability for the workers. "Socialism is not merely a nice idea," he said. "The capitalist system poses a threat to the planet. Revolutionaries can have a healthy effect on the entire movement."

Holmes talked about the role of revolutionaries in expanding the consciousness of the anti-war movement to supporting self-determination for Iraq, Palestine and all oppressed nations resisting imperialism. He showed how important it is for this movement to pay attention to the struggle at home, too, like the fight of 70,000 grocery workers on the West Coast against two-tier wages and cuts in health care.

The workers have been out for three months. Union strike funds are running low. The AFL-CIO nationally has recently begun to pay more attention to the strike/lockout. But, said Holmes, the

unions' treasuries are being depleted by big contributions to the Democratic primaries. "The unions spent millions in Iowa," he pointed out. "And what did they get for it? Wouldn't it have been better for them to put those funds into winning this struggle? But instead of a movement for health care, we had the election."

Sara Flounders reviewed how the resistance struggles of the Iraqis and Palestinians have created a crisis in the U.S. ruling class. "It was mass demonstrations in Iraq," she reminded people, "that overturned the U.S. plan for an appointed government. Every level of Iraqi society is enraged by the arrogance of the occupation."

But she cautioned that many of the criticisms being expressed of the Bush administration's handling of Iraq, like a recent report by the U.S. Air War College, are meant to make imperialism and its military more effective. This report even called

for a "friendly autocracy" in Iraq if a hand-picked "democracy" doesn't work. (See the article by Flounders in this issue of WW.)

The final plenary speaker, Fred Goldstein, followed up on the theme of the political problems facing the Bush administration, such as the admissions by David Kay, the recently resigned chief U.S. weapons inspector in Iraq. "Bush is under attack from left and right," said Goldstein, but the attacks publicized by the media are "all aimed at improving U.S. intelligence, the CIA and so on. There is no opposition from within the political establishment on Israel, or on the aims of the war in Iraq."

Goldstein also took up the discussion on the elections, pointing out how strongly many workers and progressives feel about electing "anybody but Bush." In answering this, it's important not to gloss over the differences between the two main capitalist parties. They are both parties of finance capital, he said, but "one is reactionary, the other is more reactionary."

To find a way out, however, the workers "must establish their class independence from the ruling class." Unless they establish "a working-class pole of politics, all other roads lead to captivity."

In the workshops, there were discussions on "The Basics of Marxism & Socialism," how to apply these ideas in "Fighting Racism & National Oppression," "Immigrant Rights & the Labor Struggle," and in building "Revolutionary Internationalism vs. Capitalist Globalization." Also discussed was "The Dual Character of China's Economy Today," where significant elements of capitalism exist alongside socialized state industry but power remains in the hands of the workers' state.

The discussions were also geared to mobilizing for concrete events, like the upcoming March 20 demonstrations against the occupation of Iraq and Palestine. □

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Iraqi resistance

Continued from page 6

invaded nation, or the destruction of the environment.

It is only when the occupation started facing protracted resistance in Iraq that many of the very forces who urged the war turned on the Bush administration. In Congress before the war, both Republicans and Democrats voted to give Bush full authority to wage war.

Of course the Pentagon does not want to keep tens of thousands of troops in Iraq, patrolling checkpoints. What they want is submission, quiet, order and a compliant government in place.

The same capitalist drive for new markets in a capitalist recession that fueled the German military blitzkrieg across Europe 65 years ago is fueling the Pentagon today.

But the Pentagon's vast overreach, its new bases, massive subsidies to the military-industrial complex in the form of an inflated military budget, and huge tax breaks to the super-rich won't jump start an economy drowning in glut. Instead they are dragging the economy down, while creating a volcano of opposition abroad and growing anger here in the United States. □

The Battle of Algiers & the struggle in Africa

By G. Dunkel

The film "The Battle of Algiers" vividly captures the political and human drama of Algeria's struggle to end 130 years of French colonialism. Although it was shot in 1965, it has been re-released with new subtitles and is currently playing to sold-out theaters in selected U.S. cities. It should be available on DVD soon.

Gillo Pontecorvo, the director, fought the Nazis as a member of the Italian resistance and was a member of the Italian Communist Party for a while. Saadi Yacef, the leader of the National Liberation Front (FLN) during the battle of Algiers, wrote the book on which the film is based, produced it and plays himself (El-hadi Jafaar).

What shines through in so many of the scenes is the interest and participation of the people of Algiers, who had lived through the battle. "In 1965," when this film was shot, Yacef said, "the wound was still bleeding." And the wound went deep: According to Algerian historians, over a million Algerians died in the struggle.

In the last scene, which takes place two years after the French have crushed the NLF's organization in Algiers, the people show where their hearts are and where their allegiance lies. They come out into the streets in mass, aggressively confronting the French tanks, waving thousands of Algerian flags—made overnight with no tipoff to the French and their informers.

The enthusiasm and verve of the performances make it clear that the actors were reprising roles that they had previously played in real life.

The grand demonstrations made it clear that while the French might have won the campaign, they had lost the political struggle. The Algerians were letting the world know that.

The Algerians' political methods and motives are presented so clearly in the film. How they responded to the French military, organized themselves, their bravery, self-sacrifice and determination are shown so graphically that revolutionaries from the Black Panthers to the Irish Republican Army, the Palestinians to South America have reportedly studied the film.

Not only revolutionaries have studied

it. Last summer, the Pentagon's Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict office sent out an e-mail for a private screening: "How to win a battle against terrorism and lose the war of ideas. Children shoot soldiers at point blank range. Women plant bombs in cafés. Soon the entire Arab population builds to a mad fervor. Sound familiar? The French have a plan. It succeeds tactically, but fails strategically. To understand why, come to a rare showing of this film."

The Pentagon planners obviously were looking for insights, useful for the campaign the United States is currently waging in Iraq.

The United States is not alone in this. According to the Irish Times (Jan. 17), the British Army in the Six Counties of northern Ireland also studied the film for tips on confronting the Irish Republican Army as that struggle developed.

Since the film concentrates on Algiers—very important but just a small part of a bit country—it leaves the impression that it was the change in public opinion in France and throughout the world that led to the signing of the Evian Accords on March 18, 1962.

The "Atlas de la Guerre d'Algérie" (Paris, 2003) points out that the FLN, using donations of heavy military equipment from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, had been able to build a powerful, modern army in Tunisia and Morocco, Algeria's neighbors. The military threat to the French Army was growing, especially since it was tied down by low-intensity guerrilla warfare throughout a vast country.

Role of the French Communist Party

In the film, the French paratrooper commander—Col. Carol Mathieu, played by Jean Martin, the only professional actor in the cast—asserts at a news conference that L'Humanité, the newspaper of the French Communist Party (PCF), supports the presence of his paratroopers in Algiers.

Mathieu does not really misrepresent the PCF's position. On a national, official level the PCF opposed the French Army's oppression and violations of human rights in Algeria. But it did not support Algerian independence.

PCF militants and members often had close political relations with the FLN, and took great risks, and some casualties, in supporting them. Maurice Audin, a member of the PCF and a mathematics teacher in Algeria, was tortured to death by the army, which was trying to extract information about his connection to the FLN. Another member of the PCF was guillotined.

Scores of PCF members went to jail because they resisted the draft. Others set up safe houses, raised money and agitated in support of the FLN and a free and independent Algeria.

On Oct. 17, 1961, the FLN led a demonstration. Although French troops were starting to withdraw from Algeria, French colonialism was still trying to hang onto the oil-rich section of Algeria in the Sahara desert.

The demonstration was called to protest a curfew imposed on Algerians living in Paris. Small contingents of young members of the PCF marched with their Algerian comrades, but the march was overwhelmingly Algerian, with whole families coming out.

Maurice Papon, the prefect of the Paris region—equivalent to a governor in the United States—was in charge. He was later convicted of crimes against humanity for his role in shipping Jews to Auschwitz during the German occupation. On Oct. 17, the cops attacked the demonstration, beat hundreds of demonstrators, shot some, and threw them, dead or alive, into the Seine River. Demonstrators either drowned or died from the beatings.

Out of 35,000 demonstrators, 15,000 were arrested. Police beat some of them to death in the detention centers.

The cops, in their subsequent cover-up, ignored reports of bodies pulled from the Seine for months. For more details see the French web site: <http://17octobre1961.free.fr/>.

Three months later, on Feb. 8, 1962, the



French Communist Party called for a mass demonstration under the slogan "Peace in Algeria and no to the OAS." The OAS—Secret Army Organization—in the words of the PCF "was hostile to any peace and any kind of independence for the Algerian people, and had launched a terrorist campaign in Paris beginning in early 1961."

At the Charonne subway stop, the cops, still under orders from Papon, attacked and beat eight demonstrators to death in a battle that left blood dripping from the station's ceiling.

Outrage was so great that hundreds of thousands took to the streets in a general strike a few days later. That sealed the defeat of French imperialism and made holding onto Algerian oil impossible.

But Charonne also displaced the memory of Oct. 17. Only a long, stubborn struggle on the part of some French and Algerian progressives in the 1990s brought those memories back alive.

Impact of the Algerian Revolution

Even before Algeria won its independence, the FLN's National Liberation Army, the ALN, was training cadres from the South African and Angolan liberation struggles at bases in Morocco and Tunisia. Nelson Mandela was one of the top African National Congress leaders trained in Algeria. A few years later the ALN was training cadres from Mozambique's FRELIMO, in both Algeria and Tanzania.

The ANC's obituary for Johnstone Makatini, who was popularly called Johnny and represented the ANC at the

Continued on page 10

HAITI A SLAVE REVOLUTION

The Haitian Revolution is a singular event in history. Never before or since has an enslaved people risen up, broken their chains, and established a new state. Haiti was a beacon of hope and inspiration to the enslaved Africans of the United States.

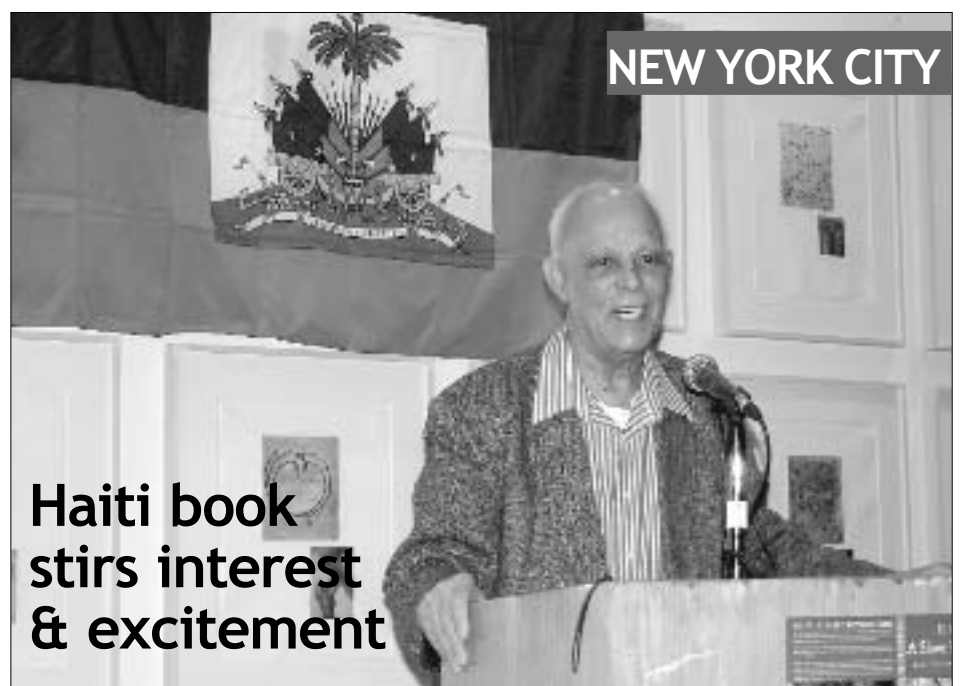
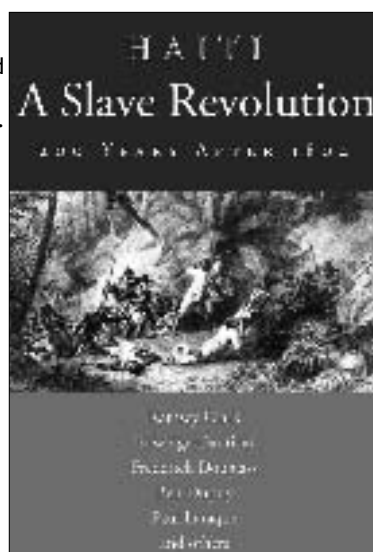
Haiti's history has been turbulent, but not for the reasons given by mainstream historians. Racism underlies their charges that the first Black Republic lacks "democratic traditions and is prone to violence."

Drawing from a wide range of authors, experts, and historical texts, this book challenges these stereotypes and counters 200 years of cultural myths. It exposes disinformation about Haiti from the 18th century until today. Above all, it reveals the intertwined relationship between the U.S. and Haiti, and the untold stories of the Haitian people's resistance to the U.S. aggressions and occupations.

Includes Ramsey Clark, Edwidge Danicats, Frederick Douglass, Ben Dupuy, Paul Laraque, Mumia Abu-Jamal, Pat Chin, Greg Dunkel, Sara Flounders, Stan Goff, Kim Ives, Fleurimond Kerns, Maude Le Blanc, Sam Marcy, Franz Mendes & Steve Gillis, Felix Morriveau-Leroy and Johnnie Stevens.

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Paul Laraque

Despite a snow blizzard, the International Action Center commemorated the bicentennial of Haiti's independence and the publication of the book "Haiti: A Slave Revolution" with culture and politics on Jan. 27 in New York. An interesting and stimulating program kept almost 200 people lined up to get their books signed by the authors and editors present.

Paul Laraque, one of Haiti's most prominent poets and a Marxist, read from his poems in English, Creole and French. Three of the poems are in the book. Ramsey Clark, former U. S. attorney general who has a chapter in the book, gave a moving and insightful summary of the relations between Haiti and the United States. Haitian union leader Ray Laforest, who was interviewed for the book, gave a presentation on the Roman Catholic Church's role in the development of the movement in Haiti.

Pat Chin put Haiti's struggle in historical context and chaired the meeting.

The IAC announced plans for a French version of the book.

—Story and picture by G. Dunkel



Africa and Iraq's debt

In December and January former Secretary of the Treasury James Baker went on an international lobbying tour to try to get countries holding Iraq's debt to forgive up to two-thirds of it.

It was hard not to notice that neither Baker nor any other imperialist official ever went on a world tour to have sub-Saharan Africa's \$300 billion debt forgiven.

When examining the differences between the two situations, it is important to note that U.S. imperialism's relationship to both Iraq and all of Africa is that of oppressor to oppressed. Europe and the United States pillaged and plundered Africa's natural and human resources for centuries. The United States has embargoed and bombed Iraq into misery and is now occupying Iraq. More than a cancellation of debt, imperialism owes large reparations to both Iraq and Africa.

The main difference between Iraq's \$116 billion debt and sub-Saharan Africa's \$300 billion debt is that U.S. imperialism's big competitors—France, Germany, Russia and Japan—hold most of Iraq's debts. Africa's main lenders are the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The United States is the biggest shareholder in both those institutions.

So Washington resists debt cancellation for Africa. Now U.S. imperialism feels that it owns Iraq, although it is having some problems getting the Iraqis to submit to this concept. But the Pentagon conquered Iraqi's army and the United States is now there. So Washington would want as little money as possible flowing out of Iraq to France or Germany.

Baker was able to bribe and threaten these countries that unless they write off a big chunk of the debt, a U.S.-controlled Iraq could cancel it. If they write down the debt, then French or German corporations might get a share of the U.S.-controlled reconstruction contracts in Iraq.

Meanwhile Africa is imprisoned by its debt. Last year President George W. Bush, with big publicity, promised an anti-AIDS initiative, a five-year, \$15 billion plan to help Africa and the Caribbean. The simple math on a \$300 billion debt shows that African countries will pay many, many times more in interest than the promised \$15 billion in aid over five years. But it turns out that even this \$15 billion was an empty promise.

Now even this small amount of money will be postponed for several years. At the same time Washington is cutting by two-thirds its funds to the United Nations to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, all major threats in Africa. □

Polls show Hutton 'whitewash' of Blair just too blatant

Anti-war movement steps up March 20 mobilization

By John Catalinotto

On Jan. 28 British Prime Minister Tony Blair looked like a clear winner in his conflict with the media. The inquiry Lord Hutton presided over had just put all the blame on the BBC for its reporting of how Blair misled the country with the weapons-of-mass-destruction charge against Iraq. Plus Hutton called the suspicious death of arms expert David Kelly, who exposed government misuse of intelligence reports, a simple suicide.

Gavyn Davies, chairperson of the BBC board of governors, resigned on Jan. 28. Andrew Gillian, the investigative reporter who broke the story that Blair had "sexed up" the charges against Saddam Hussein, resigned on Jan. 30. BBC Director General Greg Dyke resigned on Jan. 29.

It looked for a while as if Blair was coming out not only on top but unscathed.

Workers World called the Stop the War Coalition in London on Feb. 1 to see how the anti-war movement was reacting to the latest events. Despite Blair's apparent victory, members of that group were in an upbeat mood. They think the Hutton report will boomerang.

"Before the Hutton report was released," said StWC organizer Chris Nineham, "we had planned to hold some regional demonstrations for March 20—the international action day against the occupation of Iraq. Now we plan a national demonstration in London and we think plenty of people will want to come and protest again." The group drew hundreds of thousands in November to protest a visit by President George W. Bush.

On Jan. 31, with only 48 hours' notice and in terrible weather, the StWC managed to pull out hundreds of demonstrators before Number 10 Downing Street, Blair's residence, to protest the Hutton report.

"The Hutton report was just too blatant a lie for the people to swallow," said Nineham. "Even the BBC employees were demonstrating in protest that the BBC director and some others were forced to resign. The conflict inside the British establishment will help us to mobilize."

Opinion polls back Nineham. They show that most a majority of the considered the Hutton report a "whitewash."

On Feb. 1, The Mail on Sunday reported that 61 percent, and The Sunday Times reported that 54 percent, were demanding an investigation into all the contradictory claims by the government, British intelligence, the media—and into the obvious fact that no such weapons have been found.

Who is Hutton?

While Hutton's biased conclusions contributed to the suspicions surrounding the entire report, his own history should also raise doubts.

A scion of wealthy landholders in British-occupied Ireland, Lord Hutton's early claim to fame in the court system was representing British soldiers

who had fired on and killed Irish civil-rights demonstrators on Bloody Sunday in 1972. He was involved in a judicial cover-up at the time called the Widgery Inquiry, which let off British troops on murder charges.

In 1978 he represented the British government before the European Court of Human Rights, defending it against a ruling that it abused detainees from the struggle in occupied Ireland. By 1988 he was appointed to be Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland.

In 1999, when former Chilean dictator Gen. Augusto Pinochet was being held in England for possible extradition to Spain for criminal human-rights violations, Hutton led an attack on the judge who had voted to arrest and extradite Pinochet.

In other words, Hutton's legal history has been focused on protecting the most reactionary elements of society, and especially protecting the repressive apparatus of the British state. Putting Hutton in charge of this inquiry of the British regime is as convincing as having reactionary Dick Cheney pal Justice John Scalia investigate Vice President Dick Cheney's questionable connections with the oil monopolies. That is, it convinces no one.

What is the BBC?

The BBC is itself an important element in the British ruling-class establishment. The British rulers agree that they should get part of the control of Iraq. But if a conflict between the establishment media and the government has broken out, it indicates that within the ruling class there are tactical divisions about how the Iraq invasion and occupation are being handled.

Blair has an additional problem. His government has said it would not authorize another inquiry into "intelligence failures." At the same time, his erstwhile ally George W. Bush has talked of forming a new commission to investigate similar supposed failures in the United States. This puts additional pressure on Blair.

Anyone paying attention to the developments leading up to the U.S.-British invasion of Iraq knows that these contradictions had nothing to do with failures in intelligence. The Bush administration had planned to invade and occupy Iraq since it took office, according to Bush's former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill. Right after Sept. 11, 2001, Bush began frantically trying different excuses to justify this blatant aggression.

Blair was in a scurrilous alliance with this plan. Bush may still leave this ally twisting in the wind.

The contradictions arose because the Iraqi people are refusing to accept a newly imposed colonial status. They are fighting back. The Iraqi resistance causes disagreements within both the United States and British ruling classes about tactics. Will the anti-war and other progressive movements be able to use these disagreements to awaken and mobilize mass struggle against the occupation? □

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The Battle of Algiers and the struggle in Africa

Continued from page 9

United Nations for many years, captures the flavor of the times and the ferment that was brewing in the FLN camps in Morocco and later in Algiers. "In 1962, Johnny was among the first group of volunteers from Natal to be sent out of the country for military training. ...

"In Morocco he worked and struck a close friendship with leaders of liberation movements from the then Portuguese colonies, among them Marcelino Dos Santos of Mozambique, Dr. Agostinho Neto of Angola and Amilcar Cabral of Guinea-Bissau. In 1963, Algeria became independent. ... Algeria, which hosted many liberation movements, mainly from Africa and including the Palestine Liberation Organization, was a beehive of political activity

involving solidarity support for the liberation struggle."

The prestige of Algeria was so high and its support among the more progressive countries in sub-Saharan Africa was so strong that when the Organization of African Unity was formed in 1963 it was naturally a Pan-African organization, which considered the Sahara as a bridge rather than a barrier.

The strength and passion revealed in this film explains why the Algerian Revolution, which is still unfinished, had such an impact on the continent of Africa, and indeed, the world.

It is worth seeing the new version of the "Battle of Algiers" even if you have seen it before because it is a very powerful film. □

Venezuelan speaks on gains of Bolivarian revolution

By Nathalie Alsop
San Francisco

On Jan. 29, some 200 people gathered at St. Boniface Church in the Tenderloin, one of San Francisco's poorest neighborhoods, to hear Nora Castañeda, the president of the Women's Bank of Venezuela, speak about the Bolivarian Revolution. In honor of her work, the city of San Francisco named Jan. 29 Nora Castañeda Day.

Other speakers at the event included actor Danny Glover, Hari Dillon of the Vanguard Foundation, Farm Workers union leader Dolores Huerta, Solange Echeverria of KPFA/Pacifica Radio, and Selma James of Global Women's Strike.

Glover, who recently returned from a Trans-Africa delegation to Venezuela, spoke about President Hugo Chavez's commitment to a hemispheric conference on racism to follow up the world conference in Durbin, South Africa. The Vanguard Foundation announced an unprecedented grant of \$75,000 to the Women's Bank.

Castañeda began her talk by reviewing

the Spanish conquest of northern South America and the later British and U.S. neo-colonization of Venezuela. She pointed to the impact of hundreds of years of colonial domination, slavery and exploitation of the people and resources of Venezuela.

The result of these hundreds of years of exploitation: a wealthy country where 80 percent of the people live in poverty.

Castañeda held up the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which was approved in a popular referendum by a majority of Venezuelans, and spoke about the hope that Chavez's 1998 election victory brought to the people. She said, "According to the constitution, human rights come before capital."

She mentioned Article 8, which recognizes women's work in the home and guarantees social security to women who work as housewives. She added: "In Venezuela poverty has the face of a woman because 70 percent of those in poverty are women. And to defeat poverty one cannot merely increase income but one must deal with quality of life."

Castañeda spoke about the women who in 1998 organized to make their demands heard in the writing of the constitution and in the national assembly. Women organized to ensure that the constitution contained no sexist language and included women. They demanded the creation of the Women's Bank and the National Institute for Women.

Venezuela's people have been struggling against the U.S.-backed bourgeoisie to defend the achievements of the Bolivarian movement for all people. Some of the achievements mentioned were Mission Robinson, a literacy campaign that has taught over a 100 million people to read and write; 10,000 Cuban doctors working in rural Venezuela where no health services existed before; and 30,000 micro-credit loans approved by the Women's Bank.

Castañeda concluded her speech by acknowledging Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., for whom three new schools in Venezuela have been named. She said that like Dr. King, she had a dream—that



WW PHOTO: PABLO SERRANO

Nora Castañeda

we can take selfishness and individualism from our hearts in order to build another world, because another world is possible. □

Workers around the world

By Andy McInerney

EUROPE

'Open the borders to all!'

In cities across Europe on Jan. 31, tens of thousands of immigrants, labor unionists and their supporters staged rallies to demand an end to restrictions on immigration, and legal asylum for undocumented workers.

The Associated Press estimated that 2,500 people marched in Athens, Greece, chanting, "Legalize all immigrants, open the borders to all!" Some marchers clashed with neofascist hecklers.

Marches also took place in cities across Italy: Rome, Turin, Bologna, Caltanissetta and Crotona. Many marchers criticized the Italian government's immigrant detention centers, especially after prosecutors charged a center in Bologna with lacing food with sedatives to keep detainees passive.

In Spain, a coalition of unions and working-class parties joined with anti-globalization groups to protest a new law restricting immigration. Under the slogan "Native or immigrant: the same working class," the groups demanded internment centers be closed, deportations and repression of immigrants stop, immediate amnesty, and an end to European Union restrictions on immigration.

The demonstrations were the result of a call made by the European Social Forum held in Saint-Denis, France, in November. That call was for a European Day against Internment Centers and for the Free Circulation of People.

Right-wing nationalist groups and parties across Europe have been terrorizing immigrant communities at the same time governments have been imposing greater restrictions on immigrants.

IRELAND

Anti-racist rally in Belfast

Hundreds of people turned out for an anti-racist rally in Belfast on Jan. 27 organized by the Anti-Racist Network in conjunction with the labor union movement, the Republican News reported. The rally was called to protest a rash of racist attacks against African, Chinese and Pakistani immigrants in southern Belfast, in the British-occupied northern part of Ireland.

The Sinn Fein Party, which advocates an end to British control of Northern Ireland, supported the rally. Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams told the crowd that political leaders have "a duty to stand up against the racists and the bigots who were bringing terror to the ethnic minority communities of the city."

He was referring to the fact that all the attacks have occurred in segregated neighborhoods controlled by pro-British Loyalist thugs. Loyalist politicians have distanced themselves from the attacks—some of them even attended the anti-racist rally—but all evidence points to the Klan-like Loyalist paramilitary groups.

PERU

Unions protest privatization

The ancient Inca ruins at Machu Picchu in southeastern Peru are not accessible by road; they can only be

reached by a train that travels there from the closest city, Cuzco. That made the train a perfect target for the Cuzco Workers Federation, which has been protesting President Alejandro Toledo's plans to privatize 10 percent of the Machu Picchu Electric Company.

On Jan. 28, unionists set up blockades made of logs and boulders across the train tracks, forcing the railroad to shut down and stranding hundreds of tourists. Several tourist-oriented restaurants and shops were also closed by protests.

Toledo came into office in 2001 promising to create a million jobs. Yet unemployment continues to rise, fueling growing strikes and protests. Toledo's popularity is running at 10 percent, according to recent polls.

GERMANY

Warning strikes press for wage increases

The powerful German metal workers' union IG Metall began a series of rolling strikes to press the demand for a 4-percent raise. By Jan. 30, over 50,000 workers were off the job.

The bosses' federation, which includes industrial giants like DaimlerChrysler, offered 1.2-percent pay hikes over 15 months, followed by another 1.2 percent for the next 12 months. Bosses also demanded that the work week increase from 35 to 40 hours without salaries going up.

Union leaders called the offer "a slap in the face." DaimlerChrysler union council leader Erich Klimm promised to

"take the conflict into the factories."

The fight kicked off Jan. 29, when about 10,000 workers walked off the job for two-hour warning strikes. The next day, the number of strikers soared to 50,000. Union leaders promised, "The movement will grow in coming days."

IRAN

Gov't attacks worker protest

What began as a sit-in by contract workers at the Nazkhaton Copper Smelter in Babak, Iran, ended in a massacre by government security forces on Jan. 23, according to both government media and exile workers' rights groups. The International Alliance in Support of Workers Rights in Iran, a Canada-based group, issued a release stating that four to 15 workers and their supporters were killed.

The French News Agency AFP quoted a member of Iran's parliament saying that the workers had gone on strike several days earlier to demand permanent jobs. He said that helicopters carrying special police units attacked the workers in Khatunabad, and that fighting spread to the nearby town of Shahrehabak.

The AFP also noted that the People's Mujaheddeen, one of the armed opposition groups with Marxist roots in Iran, issued a statement protesting the attack. The group asserted that 15 people had been killed.

The government sent a delegation to investigate the charges, which were publicized in many of Iran's main newspapers. But the Alliance in Support of Workers Rights statement states, "There is an overwhelming lack of trust toward [Iranian President Mohammad] Khatami's delegations since they have never been accountable and sincere in the past." □

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TRAS BASTIDORES

Abatimiento en las charlas de la élite económica

Por Milton Neidenberg

El rojo es el color del día. No en la avanzada de obreros llevando las banderas rojas del comunismo. Todavía no. Pero sí del rastro de la tinta roja que representa billones de dólares en deuda global.

Este fue el tema principal discutido en el Foro Económico Mundial (FEM) a mediados de enero. En medio de los escénicos alrededores del pueblo montañoso de Davos, en Suiza, la cuestión se enfocó en la posibilidad de si una recuperación global llena de deudas dirigida por los Estados Unidos es sostenible, y por cuanto tiempo podría sostenerse.

Desde su concepción en 1970 el foro ha crecido a ser una institución de 1.000 de las corporaciones más poderosas del mundo. Su principal interés siempre ha sido el desarrollo de una estrategia que sirva a los intereses financieros y corporativos europeos.

Raramente criticaron las políticas de los Estados Unidos. En el año 2002 hasta se arriesgaron a cambiar el sitio de su reunión anual para Nueva York para mostrar su solidaridad con Wall Street y Washington después del suceso en las Torres Gemelas del 11 de septiembre del 2001.

John Ashcroft, Fiscal General de los Estados Unidos, creador del Acta Patriótica y el Vicepresidente Dick Cheney acudieron al foro, esperanzados en sacarle provecho a estos sentimientos. En su discurso ante primeros ministros, oficiales ejecutivos y banqueros centrales entre otros, Cheney —arquitecto de imperialismo y guerras preventivas— intentó vender la idea de la guerra contra el terrorismo.

En un tono conciliatorio—totalmente fuera de su carácter—trató de convencer a sus amigos depredadores a que se unieran a los Estados Unidos. “Debemos enfrentarnos a los peligros juntos... trabajando cooperativamente,” dijo Cheney. (New York Times, enero 25)

La estrategia falló.

Muchos sospechaban de sus motivos. George Soros, un multimillonario opositor a la estrategia global de Bush y quien se lucra especulando la compra y venta de corporaciones en el mercado global, comentó en su discurso, “Hay una diferencia entre las palabras de la administración Bush y sus acciones.”

Sir Howard Stringer, presidente de la Corporación Sony de América, resumió la actitud de muchos de estos ladrones corporativos europeos: “La combinación del Internet y la globalización nos ha llevado a una era de súper competencia. ... Nadie tiene el tiempo para preocuparse sobre el terrorismo internacional.” (New York Times, 25 de enero)

Al Stringer mencionar la súper competencia, hace un llamado a la burguesía europea para resistir la hegemonía de los Estados Unidos.

El debate en el Foro Económico

Mundial se concentró en el daño que las políticas estadounidenses han hecho a la economía mundial. Desde que el dólar comenzó a caer a un 20 a 30 por ciento contra el euro, lo más bajo en todo el tiempo, los bancos centrales se han preocupado sobre cuánto más bajará el dólar antes de entrar en un colapso.

Laura Tyson, presidenta del Consejo de Asesores Económicos durante la administración de Bill Clinton y ahora directora de la Escuela de Empresas de Londres, alimentó las discusiones diciendo: “Podemos atacar al gobierno de los Estados Unidos por sus políticas económicas insostenibles... Pero es su economía la que está llevando la economía mundial y no sé de donde más podría salir.” (Wall Street Journal, 22 de enero)

¿Preverán los déficits crecientes la compra de la deuda estadounidense por bancos e instituciones del exterior, la cual ahora se acerca a la fantástica cifra de \$8 (US) billones de dólares? ¿Terminarán éstos déficits y desequilibrios gigantescos, debidos en parte a la caída del dólar, en el colapso del dólar? ¿Cómo afectará esto al comercio de los Estados Unidos con los depredadores europeos? ¿Llevará la súper competencia a recriminaciones y rompimientos en el campo imperialista?

“Lo que me preocupa es este exceso de liquidez,” advirtió Williams Rodees, vicepresidente de Citigroup y primer vicepresidente del Instituto de Finanzas Internacionales, que representa a más de 300 de las más grandes instituciones bancarias y financieras del mundo. (Wall Street Journal, 23 de enero) Rhodes y otros temen que hay demasiados dólares inundando los mercados globales, desestabilizando a los mercados emergentes

de Asia y América Latina.

Los bancos estadounidenses y otras instituciones financieras han comenzado a mover miles de millones de dólares en la compra de acciones y bonos en los mercados emergentes en busca de ingresos más altos que en los Estados Unidos. El temor es que exista una “burbuja de mercados emergentes” que podría llegar a otro colapso como el de Asia en 1997 o al desfalco del tipo de Argentina.

Esta clase de préstamo conduce a una forma de especulación voraz y desenfrenada. Cuando esto ocurre durante una crisis financiera creciente, los dólares invertidos en acciones y bonos y otras formas de pagaré pueden perder su valor con una rapidez catastrófica. Nadie puede predecir cuando el proceso puede resultar en un colapso que podría tener un efecto de gran envergadura en la economía global, porque este capital está ligado por millares de hilos al los sistemas bancarios y monetarios y a la producción y circulación de bienes de consumo.

Recientemente un reporte del Fondo Monetario Internacional advirtió que los crecientes déficits presupuestarios en los EE.UU. y su desequilibrio en el comercio internacional están creando una deuda externa de tal proporción que amenaza la estabilidad de la economía del mundo.

El reporte concluyó que “las obligaciones” de los EE.UU. “al resto del mundo pueden equivaler a un 40 por ciento de su economía dentro de pocos años”, según reportó el periódico el New York Times del 8 de enero de este año. El diario calificó esto como “un nivel de deuda externa sin precedente para un país industrializado que puede hacer estragos en el valor del dólar y las tasas

de intercambio de monedas internacionales”.

El FMI ha sido correctamente acusado de ser una agencia del gobierno de los EE.UU., su accionista mayor. Para que ataque las políticas de los Estados Unidos es algo sin precedente, aunque ha hecho críticas parecidas a países subdesarrollados cuando los mandó a frenar gastos y préstamos. Es un bochorno para la administración de Bush y el jefe del Banco de la Reserva Federal, Alan Greenspan, quien es el experto manipulador de las políticas monetarias de los Estados Unidos.

El FMI no estaría sonando la alarma si no percibiera una división creciente entre la misma clase dominante de los EE.UU.

La crítica viene de Demócratas y Republicanos asociados con las empresas poderosas de Wall Street y las grandes corporaciones de este país. Incluyen a Robert Rubin, ex secretario del tesoro y socio en la firma Goldman Sachs; Allan Sinai, anteriormente con otra empresa financiera Lehman Brothers, y Paul O'Neill ex secretario del tesoro del Presidente Bush, quien es también el ex presidente de la ALCOA, la corporación gigante de aluminio.

En un reporte presentado a un grupo grande de académicos burgueses y economistas y analistas de Wall Street en una reunión reciente de la Asociación Económica de América, Rubin y Sinai calificaron el desorden financiero de la administración de Bush como una catástrofe potencial. (New York Times, 8 de enero)

La discusión entre las facciones se está calentando. La administración de Bush está en modo de ataque contra estas fuerzas, calificándolas de alarmistas. Algunos en la extrema derecha de la facción de Bush han acusado a la oposición de traicioneros durante una crisis de guerra y han llamado a un frente patriótico contra ellos.

Cuán profunda corren estas divisiones todavía está por verse. Por el momento, no han surgido en la arena electoral, donde los candidatos demócratas están compitiendo por la nominación presidencial.

Un retiro de Irak sin asegurarse el control de los botines de la guerra imperialista, una caída catastrófica en la moneda que podría aumentar las tasas de interés conduciendo a otra recesión, o el despertar de la clase trabajadora y las nacionalidades oprimidas luchando en contra de la plaga del desempleo y la pobreza —cualquiera de estas situaciones puede revelar las divisiones entre las facciones de la clase dominante. Todos estos eventos catastróficos están en el ámbito de lo posible.

El potencial de un aumento de la lucha de la clase trabajadora y las nacionalidades oprimidas está subiendo. Las consecuencias serían globales. Esto prepararía el terreno para un proceso revolucionario que desafiaría al mismo sistema capitalista destructivo y arcaico. □



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