

WORKERS WORLD

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Stimulus package— why workers need more

By Fred Goldstein

Mass protests against the global economic crisis are spreading.

Protests recently toppled the government of Iceland. There have been militant protests against unemployment in Greece, Chile, Latvia and Bulgaria. A general strike in France on Jan. 29 compelled the government to give money to the automaker Citroën in return for a promise not to lay off workers.

As the crisis deepens in the United States, the multinational working class, unions, community organizations, students and youth must not be lulled into inactivity waiting for the \$787 billion stimulus package, signed on Feb. 17, to take effect.

It is understandable that millions of workers who voted for Barack Obama are anxiously hoping that the legislation will bring them some assistance and relief from the dire economic circumstances they face. Some are unemployed and running out of benefits. Others, particularly public workers, are in danger of losing their jobs and health care.

In addition to the millions of unemployed workers and the people who have lost their homes, there are millions more who were impoverished even before the crisis and are hoping that the stimulus package will help them.

What workers get directly

Many features of the package are aimed at immediate relief. They are the very measures the Republicans focused on trying to cut back, evoking the rightful outrage of workers and all progressives.

Among many other provisions, the final

bill stipulates \$40 billion for extended unemployment benefits through Dec. 31, 2009. It increases these benefits by \$25 a week and funds job training. It sets aside \$20 billion to increase food stamp benefits by 14 percent. It includes \$3 billion in temporary welfare payments and \$14 billion for a one-time \$250 payment to Social Security recipients, people on Supplemental Security Income, and veterans receiving disability and pensions. (USAToday.com)

There is aid to students, to workers who have lost their health care, to states to keep their sinking budgets from going completely under, and other measures that, altogether, are supposed to create 3.5 million jobs.

The bill is designed to entice states into expanding their unemployment benefits to include part-time workers, workers who have been forced to leave the job for family reasons, and workers who are in training.

Better than nothing—but still a pittance

Of course, any increase in assistance to workers is better than no increase at all. When you are unemployed or falling into poverty, every dollar counts. The workers are in desperate need and should take everything they can get.

But considering that the working class has created all the wealth of this society in goods and services yet now is living with a huge deficit, the workers are entitled to a lot more than the paltry sums being talked about.

According to government statistics, the unemployment rate went up to 7.6 percent in January. It is expected to continue

growing for the foreseeable future, certainly for the rest of 2009 and into 2010.

A rate of 7.6 percent means 11.5 million jobless workers. Let's assume that the annual wage of these workers was \$40,000—which is a little less than the average wage and represents mere survival for a family of four.

If the jobless rate remains at the present level for the next year, the officially unemployed will have lost \$460 billion in wages. This does not include the millions who are unemployed but not counted because they have given up looking for work. Add them in and the figure rises to \$500 billion.

It is important to note that "total unemployment"—an official government figure that also includes those estimated to have dropped out of the workforce from discouragement about finding a job and those forced into part-time work—is actually 13.9 percent. At that rate, more than 20 million people are unemployed or underemployed. Of those, only 4.8 million are receiving unemployment benefits from the states and 1.7 million are receiving federal special supplementary benefits.

That means that 14 million unemployed or underemployed get no unemployment insurance.

Bankers get lion's share

The situation is only going to get worse. The number of unemployed is far surpassing the limited plans for job creation. For the first time since 1939, the number of unemployed has grown by more than half a million per month for three months in a row. While the stimulus package is

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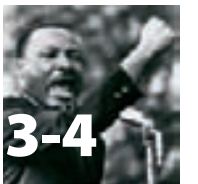
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People's victory in Venezuela Editorial 10

On Feb. 15, Venezuelans lined up at the polls to vote "sí" or "no" on term limits for elected officials including President Hugo Chávez, and the people have spoken. Nearly 55 percent of the voters decided in favor of having indefinite term limits. The struggle amongst the Venezuelan people for a socialist revolution has far from died as the media would have you believe. This vote, as said President Chávez, "was a vote for socialism." Above, thousands of people celebrate in the Venezuelan capital of Caracas following the vote.

—Report & photo by Lila Goldstein

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Class violence and national oppression

By Larry Hales

"Nonviolence is fine as long as it works."

"I don't even call it violence when it's in self defense; I call it intelligence." (africanamericanquotes.org)

The quotes above from Malcolm X don't negate one another. In fact, one quote validates the other. It is a question of tactics.

The inherent violence of the capitalist system has been demonstrated time and again throughout history. It is not necessary to peruse a history book, but simply to pick up a newspaper, walk outside or observe everyday relations. Putting profit before need is violent and as established before, class society produces struggle of the opposing classes, from whence violence inevitably arises.

But, as the words from Malcolm X illustrate, working and oppressed people are not bent on bloodthirsty revenge and the movements of workers and the oppressed don't needlessly resort to violence as a matter of course.

Rather, the tactics grow out of a necessity to defend oneself and ultimately one's interest. As Marx wrote, "What the bourgeoisie, therefore, produces, above all, is its own grave-diggers." ("Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels") This is because of the nature of the system, because workers and the oppressed struggle for every advance and concession.

The pressure exerted in the interests of one class over the other brings qualitative change—this is dialectics. Either a material change is won or from the resistance for material change comes a change in consciousness.

The original or primitive accumulation of capital in the U.S. was attained through naked brutal means—rape, murder, theft of land and slavery. If capital came into the world "dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt," ("Capital, Karl Marx") then the story of the U.S. ruling class is so mired that the blood may obscure the bludgeon.

Though the European imperialists built their societies using the same basic means, the U.S. was founded through the most extreme exploitation and trapped with

in its borders are nations of people, upon whose backs and from whose superexploited labor, the U.S. built its wealth and laid its foundation.

Vladimir Lenin referred to tsarist Russia as "the prison house of nations" because across its great expanse, through colonialism, there were over one hundred distinct ethnicities. The U.S. has replaced tsarist Russia as the prison house of nations with over 2 million incarcerated people.

Indigenous people, the many distinct North American Indian tribes, the peoples of the Pacific Islands, the people of Puerto Rico, Mexican people and Black people have been imprisoned with in a country founded on the doctrine of white supremacy over darker skinned people.

And through constant violence, nationally oppressed people in the U.S. have been kept disproportionately impoverished and subjected to legal and extralegal violence in order that the status quo is maintained.

The question of oppressed nations, of the national question, underlies all other questions in U.S. society. So, throughout U.S. history, when the issue of violence and its use by working people has come up, regardless of its timeliness—whether or not the ire of the working class in general is up enough—it has been important to defend the right of oppressed nationalities to respond to their oppression however they see fit. Self-determination of oppressed people has to be affirmed by revolutionaries.

Bourgeois ideology's grip on the minds of workers is loosened when contradictions are brightly glaring and for oppressed nationalities the contradictions have been ripe.

The contradictions of racist U.S. society and the legal and extralegal ways by which oppressed people have been held under foot have produced heroic resistance.

That resistance, whether nonviolent or violent, has been effective and it can be said that history shows, that ultimately, the use of violence by the oppressed is more justified.

Next installment will deal with the history of struggle in the U.S. and the various forms of struggle and national liberation.

PART TWO



WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

Omowale Clay to speak at Black History Month forum.

Zimbabwe featured at Feb. 27 N.Y. forum

The New York branch of Workers World Party will hold its annual Black History Month forum, featuring Omowale Clay, a leader of the December 12th Movement and Friends of Zimbabwe. Clay will speak on "President Mugabe is right—Sanctions are an act of war." The forum will be held on Friday, Feb. 27, at 7 p.m. at 55 W. 17th St., 5th floor in Manhattan. A special soul food dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m. for a donation. Call 212-627-2994 for leaflets and more information. □

MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

The following sections of the book are an outline of its contents: • Black liberation & the working-class struggle • The material basis for reparations in the U.S. • Brief overview of racist oppression & heroic resistance • What Hurricane Katrina exposed to the world

• Africa: A battleground against colonialism and for sovereignty • Justice for the Caribbean • A salute to women revolutionaries • Why fight-back is inevitable • Black labor and class solidarity

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Pa. judges jail youth for profit

By LeiLani Dowell

A case of judicial corruption in Pennsylvania has once again exposed the true nature of the profit-driven prison industrial complex and the warehousing of poor youth.

Two Pennsylvania judges, Mark A. Ciavarella Jr. and his predecessor, Michael T. Conahan, received \$2.67 million over the last seven years from a private juvenile detention center. In exchange, federal prosecutors allege, the two helped the center secure lucrative contracts from Luzerne County, then sentenced youth to detention for the mildest of infractions.

For participation in this scheme—which damaged the hopes, expectations and futures of hundreds and perhaps thousands of youth—the two judges were given a plea agreement that will see them serving a modest 87 months in federal prison. In addition, the owners of the detention facilities have not yet been charged with any crime.

In order to carry out the plot, the two judges first argued that the county-owned detention center was unsafe and decrepit. Conahan then announced that juveniles would no longer be sent to the facility, and instead to a center run by Pennsylvania

Child Care LLC, a private company.

Both judges admitted on Feb. 12 that they received payoffs from the company; its sister company, Western Pennsylvania Child Care; and Mericle Construction Inc., the company that built the facility. With the assistance of Ciavarella and Conahan, the facility was able to acquire a 20-year, \$58 million lease from the county, which was later overturned.

Prosecutors allege that Conahan established procedures that “created the potential for an increased number of juvenile offenders to be sent to juvenile detention centers.” (Republican & Herald, Jan. 27) Detention centers in Luzerne County receive money from the county government based on the number of inmates held.

Often, the parents of those sentenced had waived their child’s legal representation after being told that if they wanted to be represented by a court-appointed lawyer, they would have to wait weeks and even months—with their child remaining in detention the entire time. Ciavarella sentenced youth to detention even when probation officers recommended against



it, for “crimes” ranging from stealing change from the back seat of a car to posting a spoof about a school administrator on the MySpace social networking Web site.

The New York Times described one such case: “Chad [Uca], 18, was sentenced to three months of detention by Judge Ciavarella in 2005, when Chad was in eighth grade. Chad, who had no prior offenses, was charged with simple assault after shoving a boy at school and causing him to cut his head on a locker. Chad returned to school his freshman year, but he was so far behind in classes and so stigmatized by his teachers and peers, his mother said, that he soon dropped out.”

His mother, Ruby Cherisa Uca, told the Times, “Money is important, but my son’s life has already been completely destroyed.” Two class-action lawsuits have been filed by families of the detained youth against the two judges, the owners and operators of the facility, and the contractor who built it.

Marsha Levick, chief counsel for the Juvenile Law Center, estimated that between 1,000 and 2,000 youth were giv-

en excessive sentences. (Reuters, Feb. 12)

Entire system guilty

This profit-making scheme calls attention to the overall lack of concern for youth swept up into the prison industrial complex. Clay Yeager, former director of the Office of Juvenile Justice in Pennsylvania, noted that typical juvenile proceedings are closed to the public, but “open to probation officers, district attorneys, and public defenders, all of whom are sworn to protect the interests of children. It’s pretty clear those people didn’t do their jobs.” (New York Times, Feb. 13)

The New York Times described Luzerne County as “an area in northeastern Pennsylvania that has been battered by a loss of industrial jobs and the closing of most of its anthracite coal mines.” (Feb. 12)

As unemployment increases because of the global economic and financial crises, it can be expected that more youth across the country will be thrown into juvenile detention facilities for petty crimes of survival. Made to pay for the crimes of capitalism that they did not create, these youth will face increased hardship in the future.

The writer is a Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST) organizer.

Prison rebellion targets lack of medical care

By Gloria Rubac
Houston

Immigrant prisoners at the Reeves County Detention Center, a private prison in Pecos, Texas, took over the prison on Jan. 31 after they attempted to meet with prison officials regarding a seriously ill detainee being held in solitary confinement. When their demand that this prisoner be immediately taken to a hospital was ignored, a spontaneous rebellion began.

According to press reports in Mexico and the U.S., prisoners took over the guards’ radio communication equipment and took control of the prison, which houses 2,800 in a facility designed for 2,400.

Tear gas and rubber bullets were used against the prisoners. After a fire broke

out, guards locked the prisoners inside and abandoned the prison.

Geo Group, based in Boca Raton, Fla., is the private prison contractor that runs the facility. Geo Group is the second-largest private prison contractor in the world. The company reported that the prisoners were “cooperative and compliant after protests began.”

However, a Feb. 1 CNN report entitled, “Texas riot quelled, inmates damage buildings,” claims there were at least three prisoners hospitalized, including one with severed fingers.

This was the second rebellion in as many months at the west Texas prison. Causes reported by the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR) are negligent medical care resulting in inmate deaths; rat, roach and insect

infested kitchens and living areas; and punishment and ridicule for asking to see a doctor for life-threatening complaints.

Solitary confinement is routine for prisoners who request medical attention. According to the NNIRR, immigrant prisoners have died and been removed from their cells in the last three months.

Medical negligence and abuse by guards and other staff have caused deaths. The rebellion is over but activists and civil rights advocates are demanding a complete investigation of the Reeves County Detention Center.

Formerly Wackenhut Corrections Corporation, Geo Group calls itself a world leader in the privatized management of corrections. According to the company’s Web site, “The North American market

is growing rapidly, and we are focused on expanding Federal procurement opportunities.” Geo Group reported raking in \$1.024 billion in revenues in 2007, with net income totaling nearly \$42 million.

The NNIRR sent out an Urgent Action Request asking people to make phone calls and send faxes to a number of offices, from the Reeves County sheriff to the Department of Homeland Security to congressional representatives. See www.nnirr.org.

The American Civil Liberties Union’s National Prisoner Project and the ACLU of Texas have issued an action alert which is at www.aclutx.org. They are calling for an investigation by the U.S. Justice Department’s Office of the Inspector General “to determine not only the immediate cause of the riots but also the root cause.” □

Falsified evidence, lies

Philadelphia cops’ frame-ups under fire

By Joseph Piette
Philadelphia

Hundreds of Philadelphia drug convictions could be overturned, and pending cases dropped, because of police falsification of evidence against people they accused of dealing drugs.

Narcotics Officer Jeffrey Cujdik has been put on desk duty and relieved of his service pistol, pending further investigations by the FBI, the district attorney and police department Internal Affairs. “The investigation includes everyone who made an arrest with Cujdik and any other informant who worked with him,” one official said. (Philadelphia Daily News, Feb. 9) At least six other police-paid informants worked with Cujdik.

Cujdik is accused of ordering longtime informant Ventura Martinez to falsify evidence in order to build cases against people Cujdik targeted. The illegal practice came to light in a Philadelphia Daily News story in which Martinez said Cujdik sometimes ordered him to buy drugs else-

where when he was unable to make a buy from an alleged drug house. Cujdik then lied in search-warrant applications, saying he had witnessed Martinez purchase the drugs from the targeted house.

Five years of cases in question

Police began using Martinez as an informant as far back as 2003, paying him \$150 to \$200 for each drug or gun case he helped develop. It’s a long-standing and questionable police department practice to pay confidential informants to make drug buys and give tips leading to drug and gun arrests.

A 12-year veteran, Cujdik has been one of the busiest narcotics cops on the force. In 2007, according to city payrolls, he made nearly \$50,000 in overtime, much of it from court appearances, on top of his \$55,389 yearly salary. Martinez also claims he gave Cujdik more than \$20,000 in informant cash to rent a house that Cujdik owned.

The scandal came to light when defense attorney Stephen P. Patrizio became

suspicious of similarities with other search warrants involving “Confidential Informant Number 103” (Martinez) and Cujdik. During his investigation, Patrizio had a photograph taken of the informant leaving a house owned by Cujdik. It turned out that Martinez and his family rented the house from Cujdik from September 2005 to January 2009. The lease agreement violated police rules that require cops to keep an arms-length relationship with informants.

Once Informant No. 103’s name and address were released in court, Martinez

contacted the press, Internal Affairs and the FBI in an effort to qualify for the witness protection program. FBI agent Janice Fedarcy said, “It would be premature to outline exactly what our steps are going to be,” and Martinez, scared for his life, said the protection program has not been offered to him yet. (Philadelphia Daily News, Feb. 14)

From juvenile court to death row

The use of false testimony from witnesses and informants, in addition to the prac-

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An interview with Mumia Abu-Jamal on prison, capitalism, politics, revolution, solidarity

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By Monica Moorehead

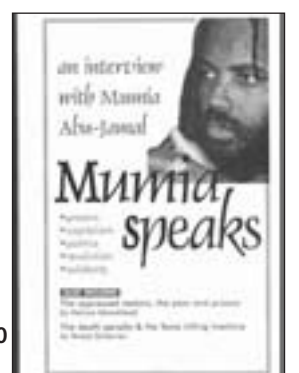
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Order books by Mumia Abu-Jamal online at www.Leftbooks.com



Republic workers victory tour excites Detroit

By Bryan G. Pfeifer
Detroit

At the packed International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 58 union hall in Detroit Feb. 9, a multinational crowd witnessed history as Armando Robles, president of Electrical Workers union (UE) Local 1110, and Bob Kingsley, UE director of organizing, presented a "Sit-Down Pioneer" award to two Flint sit-down strikers of 1936-1937, Geraldine Blankenship of the Women's Emergency Brigade and Olen Ham.

Upon taking the podium, Robles dedicated the sustained applause for him to the Flint sit-downers. He began by noting that the first sit-downers at Republic this past December in Chicago were mostly women, thanked everyone present for the solidarity during the sit-down and said that it's the workers who make the wealth.

"We have to force the government and the bosses to get our rights and our dignity for ourselves and for workers around the world," declared Robles to rousing shouts of "That's right!" and applause.

Bob Kingsley, UE's director of organizing, explained how UE Local 1110 received international support from thousands of labor, community, student and faith-based organizations.

"This 15-city tour is to encourage more resistance. Real change—change that benefits workers, not bankers and CEOs—must be driven from the bottom up by collective action and collective protest, by more resistance. Workers are so powerful. Victory to working people everywhere," concluded Kingsley.

The Detroit meeting was sponsored by Southeastern Michigan Jobs with Justice and co-sponsored by numerous labor



UE leaders Bob Kingsley and Armando Robles present honorary awards to surviving Flint sit-down strikers Geraldine Blankenship and Olen Ham, Feb. 9.

WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK

and community organizations. Bill Bryce, JWW organizer, said, "We win when we work together."

Feb. 9 participants were invited to the hall by Elaine Crawford, president of the 5,600 member IBEW Local 58. Sandra Williams, president of the Metro Detroit AFL-CIO, thanked the UE for the fight-back inspiration and called for all present to sign Employee Free Choice Act cards. Members of the Michigan AFL-CIO also participated.

A UE video explained how teams of Republic workers engaged in security, cleaning, food distribution and other tasks. Numerous allies explained how and why they supported the sit-down, describing the dozens of protests at Bank of America branches, including in Detroit and in North Carolina at BOA headquarters.

Music was provided by Bill Meyer, the Soneo Latin Jazz Band, the cast of the opera "Forgotten" and Jose Rios, all members of the Detroit Federation of Musicians Local 5. Martha Reeves per-

formed "Dancin' in the Streets." The cast of "Forgotten" sang the 1930s CIO song, "Sit Down."

The Industrial Workers of the World Detroit's Wobbly Kitchen provided refreshments. A photograph display by Alan Pollock entitled "Detroit Solidarity Delegation with UE Republic Workers—December 2008" depicted five current or former union members from Detroit who traveled to Chicago Dec. 10 for a rally and then were invited onto the occupied shop floor by the workers. The event closed with a rousing version of the song "Solidarity Forever."

Press conference & labor tour

UE members attended a Feb. 9 morning press conference held at the Metro Detroit AFL-CIO that only progressive media attended. In the afternoon UE field representative Abe Mwaura, Robles and Kingsley visited a plant in the city of River Rouge, adjacent to Detroit, where 1,700 of the 1,800 members of the United Steelworkers were recently laid off.

Robles emphasized that all of the Detroit events that the UE workers' victory tour was meant to inspire fightbacks within the international working class, such as the ongoing Waterford Crystal plant occupation in Waterford, Ireland. Robles said that he and his fellow Local 1110 members believe that workers have a property right to their jobs and, due to the labor they expend, they have a property right to machines, plants and products as well.

During a tour stop in Providence, R.I., UE tour members pledged their support to help win justice for over 200 workers locked out of a local manufacturing company. □

ON THE

Workers march for jobs in Illinois

Over 5,500 workers and their supporters stretched more than eight blocks during a "Put America Back to Work" march in Granite City, Ill., on Feb. 10. They included laid-off steelworkers in Granite City and laid-off auto workers from Decatur and Fenton, Mo. More than 2,500 members of Steel Workers Local 1899 were laid off from U.S. Steel-Granite City Works in December. The march, sponsored by local and state labor unions and several community groups, was held to support passage of the federal stimulus bill. The workers, whose output is between 30 and 35 percent construction-grade steel, supported the bill because they hope it will help them get back to work. In its report on the march, the St. Louis Suburban Journals noted that "'shovel-ready' infrastructure projects such as roads, bridges and schools could begin within 90 to 120 days" after the bill is signed into law and "each billion dollars spent on infrastructure generates \$6 billion in economic activity and provides 34,000 'good-paying' jobs." (Feb. 10) Imagine if there were marches of laid-off workers demanding jobs all over this country. Better yet in Washington, D.C.

Contract won after 6-month teachers' struggle

The 800 teachers in the Wayne-Westland district of Michigan put up a six-month struggle, including a four-day strike last October, to win a new contract on Feb. 3 that included raises and smaller class sizes. The one concession was slightly higher deductibles for health care coverage. Though the union agreed to a no-strike, no-lockout provision in the new contract, the district agreed not to prosecute the teachers who participated in the "illegal" strike. One of the things that worked in the teachers' favor was that a number of parents and students showed solidarity on the picket lines. (Detroit News, Feb. 3)

Talks extended for refinery workers

The United Steel Workers union agreed Feb. 1 to extend talks on a new three-year contract for 26,000 oil workers at 74 U.S.

Cleveland workers hear from Republic strikers

On Feb. 10 over 100 trade unionists, students and community activists filled the Teamsters Local 407 hall to hear about the heroic sit-down at Republic Windows and Doors Factory this past December. Bob Kingsley, UE Director of Organizing, raised that the U.S. Chamber of Commerce had a key national figure sitting in on the negotiations between UE, Republic management and the Bank of America. According to Kingsley, the Chamber representative

was quite eager to get the dispute settled, expressing fear that the sit-down tactic might otherwise spread.

Armando Robles, president of UE Local 110, described the process leading up to the takeover and the high level of solidarity that was maintained. He spoke of his encounter in Detroit with the surviving participants of the 1937 Flint Sit-down: "I was so proud to meet them and shake their hands." —Martha Grevatt

Caravan demands a 'People's Bail-Out' in Georgia

There was an air of excitement and anticipation as dozens of people decorated a flatbed truck and assorted other vehicles in preparation for the "demonstration on wheels" which would take about 200 people from across Georgia to the gold-domed state Capitol.

It was Feb. 12 and the "People's Bail-Out Plan: The Change We Want To See" protest was about to hit the streets of downtown Atlanta with a reggae band on board the truck, scores of youth and adults waving signs and amplified chants echoing off the tall buildings. The caravan drew enthusiastic honks from passing motorists, waves from construction and hotel workers, smiles and cheers from students and picture taking from international tourists as it traveled from a homeless shelter, passing by exclusive hotels and the Georgia State University campus

before stopping in front of the Capitol building.

Sandra Robertson, director of Georgia Citizens Coalition on Hunger, the initiating organization of the 29th annual Poor People's Day at the Capitol, stated that some 393,168 Georgians were out of work; 112,000 had jobs that paid below the federal minimum wage; and 116,225 homes had been foreclosed on in 2008.

Denouncing the Georgia law that sets a maximum of four years in a lifetime for receiving Temporary Assistance to Needy Families funds, she declared that unemployment and poverty don't have four-year maximums.

The seven points of the People's Bail-Out Plan were the result of several months of discussion by activists and community organizers from Rome and Augusta to Macon and Soperton, all Georgia cities.



They include an immediate moratorium on foreclosures, a raise in the Georgia minimum wage, single-payer universal health care, tax reform, no privatization of public services such as education, and the elimination of the time limits for TANF.

The rally concluded with a People's Telephone Jam with the participants using their cell phones to call the legislators' offices to simultaneously demand passage of the People's Bail-Out Plan.

—Dianne Mathiowetz

PICKET LINE

by Sue Davis

facilities. The current contract expired Jan. 31. If an agreement is not reached by March 1—the major issue is wages—the workers have voted to strike. (AFP, Feb. 2)

Labor 'rat' is ruled free speech

The New Jersey Supreme Court ruled on Feb. 6 that a town can't ban a large inflatable rat used to protest anti-union labor practices. The case was brought by Electrical Workers Local 269 against Lawrence Township after it was fined \$133 for violating the town's sign ordinance in April 2005. The union was protesting use of nonunion labor at a health club. Calling it a "landmark" ruling, not just for unions in New Jersey but all around the country, the union's lawyer told the New Jersey Star-Ledger, "This decision really validates the rights of the unions ... to peacefully and effectively express themselves." (Feb. 6)

LGBT coalition supports passage of EFCA

Pride at Work, the AFL-CIO organization that advocates on behalf of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender workers, has put together a broad coalition of LGBT organizations working for passage of the Employee Free Choice Act, which will make it easier for workers to join unions. Among the many influential groups supporting the bill are the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, the National Center for Transgender Equality and the Human Rights Campaign. To find out more about Pride at Work's campaign, visit prideatwork.org. While you're at it, sign the petition supporting EFCA.

S.F. labor groups demand Gaza relief

On Jan. 26 the San Francisco Labor Council passed unanimously (with two abstentions) a resolution that called on the Israeli government "to open immediately its border crossings into Gaza so that urgently needed humanitarian and reconstruction assistance can avert further pain and suffering by the Palestinian people in Gaza." The resolution was sent to the California Federation of Labor, the AFL-CIO and Change to Win, urging them to take similar action. On Feb. 4, Golden Gate Branch 212 of the Letter Carriers Union passed a resolution that called on the governments of Israel and Egypt to "open immediately the border crossings into Gaza, and keep them open, so that urgently needed humanitarian and reconstruction assistance can avert further pain and suffering by the Palestinian people in Gaza." □

Philadelphia cops' frame-ups under fire

Continued from page 3

tice of preying on drug suspects, stealing their money and covering up police crimes with false arrests and search warrants, led to the arrests of five cops in the 39th Police District scandal in 1995. The city of Philadelphia had to release almost 500 prisoners and subsequently paid \$4 million to settle civil rights lawsuits because of improper police conduct.

One hundred and twenty miles away in Luzerne County, juveniles with minor offences were improperly sentenced, often without access to defense attorneys,

Honoring Black history

Longshore union unites past, current struggles

By Joan Marquardt
San Francisco

Several hundred people gathered in the International Longshore and Warehouse Union's historic union hall Feb. 14 for a Black History Month rally, entitled "Racism, Repression and Rebellion: The Lessons of Labor Defense," in San Francisco.

ILWU leader and rally chairperson Clarence Thomas recounted the history of the ILWU, a predominantly African-American union in the San Francisco Bay Area. He reminded the crowd that "Racism is pervasive in our society and affects the labor movement, like it does all other areas of society" and that despite the history-making election of the first African-American president, Barack Obama, "Racism is still alive and well in this country."

Thomas noted the recent news story of some juvenile court judges accepting kickbacks from racists to convict Black youths accused of petty crimes. He added that the police killing of Oscar Grant, a 22-year-old Black father, in Oakland on Jan. 1 by a white transit cop, would not have become known if it had not been recorded on several passengers' cell phones and made public.

The ILWU's 1984 historic refusal to load cargo from apartheid South Africa was later recognized by Nelson Mandela himself. This past week the Congress of South African Trade Unions held a national week of action, entitled "Free Palestine, Isolate Israel," where Durban dockworkers refused to offload cargo from a ship from Israel. Clarence Thomas called this action a strong testament to the power of international labor solidarity.

Tayo Aluko, a Nigerian actor, performed a cultural piece, originally written, spoken

and sung by the great African American, Paul Robeson. Thomas stated that "The ILWU made Paul Robeson an honorary member of the union because he was a revolutionary artist who put his career on the line to defend the oppressed."

Cristina Gutierrez, a long-time supporter of Mumia Abu-Jamal and community activist, told the rally that immigrant workers are tired of being used against striking workers, often striking Black workers, because immigrant workers are part of the whole working class. She ended by leading the crowd to chant, "Free Mumia! Workers of the world, UNITE!"

Haiti Action Committee founding member Pierre LaBossiere spoke of the historic uprisings of Haitians against foreign exploitation and oppression. LaBossiere explained that Haitian President Aristide's attempt to raise the minimum wage of Haitian workers triggered the U.S. Marine invasion that forcibly removed Aristide from office and out of Haiti.

Martina Davis-Correia, sister of death row prisoner Troy Davis, spoke about her brother's wrongful conviction for killing a man he was actually attempting to protect, and the years since 1991 he has spent on death row in prison. The crowd stood up and chanted, "Free Troy Davis!"

JR, Minister of Information of Prisoners of Conscience, spoke about Oscar Grant and called on everyone to support freedom for the Oakland 100, those arrested for participating in a spontaneous rebellion following Grant's killing.



PHOTO: DELORES LEMON-THOMAS

Clarence Thomas and Martina Davis-Correia, Troy Davis' sister, Feb. 14.

Richard Brown, one of the San Francisco 8 and a former member of the Black Panther Party, demanded that all charges be dropped against the eight longtime community activists. Rev. Cecil Williams spoke on racial profiling and commended the ILWU for promoting action to empower Black youth to overcome racist oppression.

Jack Heyman of Local 10 recalled the heroic ILWU shutdown of West Coast ports in 1999, demanding that world renowned political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal be set free. Robert Bryan, lead attorney for Abu-Jamal's defense, talked about the years of struggle to get Abu-Jamal released from prison, where he is still on death row.

Clarence Thomas closed the rally by recognizing the women responsible for much of the organizing of the rally, stating that "These young ILWU members are the future of the ILWU." □

New England fightback conference will target banks, Wall Street

By Frank Neisser
Boston

Activists from around New England will gather Feb. 28 at the union hall of the Boston School Bus Drivers, United Steelworkers Local 8751, for a conference on the economic crisis and how to fight back. The event is being hosted by USW 8751.

In addition to the union, other endorsers of the conference include African-Ame-

rican Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner; Prof. Tony Van Der Meer; Women's Fightback Network; International Action Center; Bishop Filipe Teixeira; Rev. Franklin Hobbes of Heal Our Land; Miya X of Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST); Stonewall Warriors; and many others.

Chuck Turner will address the conference, which will also hear from Larry Holmes, a national coordinator of the Bail Out the People Movement. A strong delegation will be participating from the Rhode Island Peoples Assembly in Providence, including members of DARE and the George Wiley Center. Students and youth from the Boston Youth Organizing Project plan to attend, as well as workers from Harvard University who are fighting back against layoffs there.

The conference comes at a time when workers are under attack in Boston, around the state and throughout New England. Massachusetts has a \$1.5 billion dollar deficit. Gov. Deval Patrick has announced round after round of budget cuts and layoffs and has said he will direct federal bailout money to private developers instead of local communities and people's programs.

In Boston, the mayor used his State of

the City address to demand city workers take a wage freeze in addition to layoffs. Meanwhile, the school department announced a budget proposal calling for 15 percent cuts and dismantling desegregation in public schools. This will be done by eliminating school bus routes and drastically reducing access to equal, quality education for children in the African-American and other oppressed communities.

The conference will project a fightback on all these fronts, as well as continue the struggle by the Women's Fightback Network and the Heat and Light Campaign to demand an economic state of emergency, and to fight foreclosures, evictions and utility shutoffs. Participants will discuss mobilizing throughout New England for the April 3-4 March on Wall Street being organized by the national Bail Out the People Movement.

The Feb. 28 conference is being organized by Bail Out the People Movement, Boston. It will start at 1 p.m. at the USW Local 8751 hall, 25 Colgate Rd., Roslindale, Mass. To endorse, send an e-mail to bopmboston@gmail.com. For information on the conference and the ongoing fightback, go to bopm-boston.blogspot.com or call 617-522-6626. □

Youth group says 'March on Wall St.!'

The following excerpted statement was issued by the youth group *Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST)*.

The Bail Out the People Movement is calling for a march on Wall Street on April 3 and 4.

April 3 will mark the 41st year since Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech to striking sanitation workers who were working for meager wages and being severely repressed. April 4 will be the 41st anniversary of King's assassination.

These are important dates to commemorate. Workers and the oppressed are being fired and evicted in mass numbers and face an increasingly turbulent future.

Wall Street is the center of U.S. high finance and therefore the center of parasitic U.S. imperialism. Imperialism seeks greater and cheaper access to resources and commodities, pitting workers around the globe against one another in a drive to the bottom.

Youth and students have a vested interest in being a dynamic presence at the march. For youth ages 16 to 19, the unemployment rate is more than 20 percent, more than 30 percent for Black youth and 18 percent for white youth. The unemployment rate is in double-digit numbers for Latinas/os and Indigenous people.

While banks and automakers get bailed out, workers and the oppressed are saddled with debt for trying to survive, go to school or own a home.

In 2004 the National Center for Education Statistics reported that by the time they graduate, more than 66 percent of college and university students will have student debt. NCES stated that most graduate with at least \$15,000 in student loans and that many wind up with more than \$30,000 in student debt.

These figures do not include the loans parents take out to send their children to college, nor do they factor in credit card debt used to pay for books, meals and other expenses.

Young people should be bailed out of the debt incurred for seeking higher education. Education is a right and should be guaranteed. All student loans and credit card debt used to pay for books or meals should be cancelled.

Hundreds of billions of dollars have been spent to wage war against the people of Iraq and Afghanistan, and in assistance to Israel—which is waging a genocidal war against the Palestinian people. Hundreds of billions of dollars more have been spent to bail out banks, other financial institutions and the auto corporations.

The money spent on bailouts and war is money that could be spent for actual



WW PHOTO: DANTE STROBINO

Raleigh FIST members join United Electrical workers to protest Bank of America in Charlotte, N.C., this past December.

needs. For instance, the \$700 billion used for the Troubled Assets and Relief Program could have paid off all \$300 billion in student debt, or could have been used to provide universal health care for six years.

A pitched workers' struggle is needed—one in solidarity with all oppressed peoples; against racism, sexism and

homophobia; and with a program for working people, not the rich. Youth are needed to fight for the better world they will inherit.

We urge you to help mobilize youth and students to converge on Wall Street and shake the foundations of the Financial District. □

Stimulus package—Why workers need more

Continued from page 1

supposed to create 3.5 million jobs over the next two years, 3.6 million jobs have already been destroyed since the crisis began in December 2007.

To make matters worse, the government's plan to bail out the banks aims to squander \$2.5 trillion—three times the amount of the stimulus plan. The excuse for this fund is to "loosen up the credit markets."

The fact that the government has given the banks trillions of dollars in direct cash and loan guarantees certainly entitles Washington to tell the banks: "Lend, or else." But everyone knows that banks will not lend in an economy that is going under. There is no profit in lending in a shrinking economy and that is what banks do—make profit.

So why give trillions of dollars to greedy, profit-gouging bankers to "help" the economy? They are less than useless and have proven it by wild, fraudulent speculation that has ended up in disaster.

That money is being taken away from the stimulus package. It is being taken away from funds needed to keep people in their homes. It should be used to create a real jobs program. The multinational working class needs a direct jobs program. Unemployment insurance, if you're lucky enough to get it, has a time limit and is

not enough to live on. What workers need most right now is jobs at a living wage and an affordable home.

This is what the \$2.5 trillion bailout should be spent on—every nickel of it.

Save workers, not profits

The secret truth that no one in the government dares say out loud is that most of these big banks are probably insolvent already. They should have been declared bankrupt long ago because the debts on their books are not worth much more than pennies on the dollar. The bailout is meant to keep these crooks from going under.

These millionaires and billionaires are worrying that they may be down to their last \$100 million or so. Meanwhile, millions of workers are worrying about how to pay their rent, their mortgages, their bills for food, medical care, credit cards, auto loans, student loans and so on.

Only after decades of economic attacks on the multinational working class is the capitalist government hastily coming forward with a pittance in aid. These band-aids have nothing to do with concern for the workers. They are meant to save the profit system.

The help the government is offering is a pittance in comparison to what is needed.

The workers and their communities must form alliances everywhere to fight back.

This is an emergency!

The federal government and every state and local government have provisions in their charters or constitutions mandating the authorities to render assistance to the residents of a state or locality in time of emergency. The profit-addicted capitalist class has created emergencies everywhere—of unemployment, poverty, homelessness, medical crises and hunger.

An outstanding example of fightback is the Detroit Moratorium Now! campaign. The organizers have been carrying on a campaign of mass demonstrations and popular agitation to force the government to pass legislation to declare an emergency and stop foreclosures and evictions. The campaign has influenced the political atmosphere in Michigan to the extent that the Wayne County sheriff recently found a legal reason under the provisions of the Troubled Asset Relief Program to refuse to execute any more foreclosures.

Mass layoffs in times of unemployment create a threat to survival, a true emergency for the workers, their families and the communities that depend on their income.

State and local governments have given hundreds of billions of dollars in tax breaks, infrastructure and other enticements to get corporations to build in their areas in order to promote jobs and economic activity. Every one of these companies that closes down or cuts shifts is in violation of such an agreement. The community and the workers have every right to enforce the agreement by demanding that the plants stay open and the jobs remain.

In general, the right to a job should be recognized as a right of all workers. Every worker who has worked for a boss has contributed to the wealth of the employer and the creation of the enterprise. The workers have property rights to their jobs, since they have created the property by their labor.

Inextricably bound to this right is the right to occupy the workplace, the way the Republic Windows and Doors workers did in Chicago and the way the Waterford-Crystal workers have done in Kilbarry, Ireland.

There are innumerable legal ways to assert the rights of workers. But the only way to make those rights legally enforceable is for mass organization and struggle to compel the employers and the governments to meet their obligations to the people. □

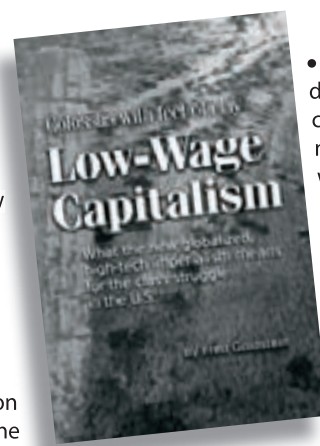
"This book helps us to understand the root of the present neoliberal globalization—a new stage of the international capitalist crisis—which was imposed by U.S. imperialism and which devastated and dominated Latin American economies, forcing millions of workers to emigrate to the U.S. looking for jobs. They found exploitation and humiliation."

— Ignacio Meneses,
Co-chair, US-Cuba Labor Exchange

Low-Wage Capitalism

A timely new book by Fred Goldstein describes in sweeping detail the drastic effect on the working class of new technology and the restructuring of global capitalism in the post-Soviet era. It uses Karl Marx's law of wages and other findings to show that these developments are not only continuing to drive down wages but are creating the material basis for future social upheaval. The analysis rests on three basic developments in the last three decades:

- The world's workforce available to exploitation by transnational capitalist corporations doubled in the wake of the collapse of the USSR and Eastern Europe.



- The technological revolutions of the digital age, in both production and communications, have allowed transnational corporations to destroy high-wage jobs and simultaneously expand the global workforce to generate a worldwide wage competition.
- The decline in the economic condition of the workers, driven by the laws of capitalism and the capitalist class, is leading to the end of working-class compromise and retreat and must end up in a profound revival of the struggle against capital.

Order online at www.Leftbooks.com

'The workers united will never be defeated!'

Irish workers occupy Waterford glass factory

By Martha Grevatt

Several hundred Irish workers have occupied the world famous Waterford Crystal glass factory. The sit-down began Jan. 30 when the shop stewards in the plant learned that it would close and 480 of the 650 workers would be immediately out of a job.

After they saw guards locking gates, members of the UNITE union fought their way past security guards and broke windows to gain control of the factory and tourist center. David Carson of Deloitte and Touche, the appointed receiver of the company, had just hired extra guards. Carson was put in charge when the parent firm Wedgwood Waterford, awash in debt, could buy no more time from creditors, principally Bank of America.

Bank of America had also helped provoke a sit-in at Republic Windows and Doors in Chicago in December by refusing to loan the company money needed to keep the plant open. The struggle there, led by United Electrical Workers Local 1110, ended when workers won the severance pay, vacation pay and health benefits they were legally entitled to. In 2007, sit-downs in Canada and Australia won similar victories following sudden plant shutdowns.

The Waterford workers, however, demand more than severance compensation. They are refusing to leave until the

decision to close the plant is reversed.

The day following the beginning of the occupation a solidarity rally outside the plant drew 2,000 people. Later the Waterford Council of Trade Unions held a march on the plant of 9,000. The population of Waterford and surrounding suburbs in Munster Province is less than 50,000. A Feb. 6 editorial in the Munster Express explained that closing the plant and visitor center, which draws 300,000 tourists a year, "would tear the heart out of the city."

Local shops and restaurants are supplying food and beverages to the workers inside. Sympathizers have donated blankets and sleeping bags for workers who have now been inside over two weeks.

Letters of support are pouring in. Rallies are taking place in both the Republic of Ireland and the British-occupied six counties in the north, as well as other countries, including New Zealand.

On Feb. 5 the workers took their message to Dublin, the capital of Ireland. They occupied the lobby of Deloitte, chanting, "The workers united will never be defeated!" and only left after they were granted a meeting with key company executives.

At least 100 workers occupy the visitor center at any given time. Cafeteria blackboards now read "Carson Pie—Warning: Contains Bullshit—Union Advises Members To Stay Clear" and "Today's Soup: Receivers Broth. Warning: Contains



INDYMEDIA.ORG.IE

Anti-bank, anti-pay-cut protest organized by Teachers United in Dublin, Ireland, Feb. 9.

Lies, False Promises, plus Croutons of Insincerity. Workers Unite." Visitors can still tour the plant with a sit-downer tour guide.

Resurgent workers' struggle

The flag known as the Starry Plough is now flying over the plant. During the 1916 Easter Rising against British colonialism the Irish Citizen Army carried this flag, which was the brainchild of the martyred socialist and nationalist James Connolly. It symbolized the idea that a free Ireland would control its destiny "from the plough to the stars."

This year marks the hundred-year anniversary of the founding of the Irish Transport and General Workers (now Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union), which Connolly helped found with Jim Larkin. Larkin coined the phrase "An injury to one is the concern of

all," which evolved into the more familiar "An injury to one is an injury to all."

The Waterford sit-down demonstrates that the Irish labor movement, which has a proud tradition of struggle against both capitalist exploitation and British colonialism, is seeing a resurgence. The Irish Council of Trade Unions has called for major demonstrations beginning Feb. 21 in response to government attacks on workers' pensions. The Sinn Fein Weekly An Phoblacht (The People) reported that "SIPTU General President Jack O'Connor warned that industrial action on 'a very dramatic scale' was a real possibility. O'Connor said widespread action rather than a simple 'walk around town' would be needed to defeat 'an attack on workers across the economy.'"

Sinn Fein has strongly supported the sit-down. Arthur Morgan, the party's national spokesperson on Trade, Enterprise and Employment, visited the workers. At a meeting of the Waterford City Council, Sinn Fein Council member Joe Kelly was loudly applauded when he called on the Irish government to nationalize the factory. Kelly is also a shop steward who has 36 years in the plant.

Independent Council member Mary Roche added, "We must stand up and refuse to accept the old rules; damn the rules and damn the Bank of America." (Munster Express, Feb. 13)

E-mail: mgrevatt@workers.org

March on Wall Street on the anniversary of the day Martin Luther King gave his life fighting for social and economic justice.

Just as King knew that the struggle for civil rights at home had to also be part of the struggle against war abroad, he understood that no one, regardless of their race, would be free until everyone had the right to a decent paying job or an income for those unable to work.

Partial list of endorsers of the March on Wall Street: Ad Hoc National Network to Stop Foreclosures & Evictions; Black Workers for Justice, Raleigh, NC; Cynthia McKinney; No. Carolina Public Service Workers Union-UE L. 150; People's Organization for Progress; Moratorium Now! Coalition To Stop Foreclosures & Evictions (Mich.); Labor/Community Coalition to Stop Foreclosures & Evictions (Calif.); BAYAN USA; May 1 Coalition For Worker & Immigrant Rights (NYC); Million Worker March Movement East; Chris Silvera, Sec-Treas., Teamster L. 808; Harlem Tenants Council, NY, NY; Private Health Insurance Must Go Coalition, NYC; Charles Barron, member, NYC Council*; Queers for Peace & Justice; Women's Fightback Network (Mass.); Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST youth); Int'l Action Center; Action Center For Justice, Charlotte, NC; Queers Without Borders, Hartford, CT; Maine Green Independent Party; Guyanese American Workers United, NY, NY; Pakistan USA Freedom Forum; Troops Out Now Coalition.

For more endorsers, or to endorse go to www.bailoutpeople.org

* For identification purposes only

212.633.6646

Email: bailoutpeople@safewebmail.com



WE DEMAND JOBS!
¡Si Se Puede!

Bail Out PEOPLE NOT the Banks



NATIONAL MARCH ON WALL ST.

STOP THE LAYOFFS

Bail Out Students & Youth

END Attacks on Women & LGBT People

STOP Evictions & Foreclosures

Housing & Health Care are a Right!

Fight Racism & POLICE BRUTALITY

NO Transit Fare Hike!

SUPPORT WORKER & IMMIGRANT RIGHTS All Out May 1

UNION Yes! Bail Out Workers Pass EFCA Now!

Bring ALL the Troops HOME NOW!

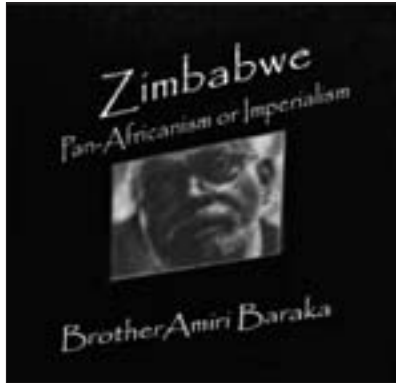
\$\$\$ for Education Not War & Occupation Iraq-Afghanistan-Palestine

Yes, 2 days. The protest will start on Fri. April 3. More people from all across the country will join us on Sat. April 4

FRI & SAT April 3 & 4 1pm
Intersection Wall St. & Broad (NY Stock Exchange) Both days

Voices from Harlem forum on Zimbabwe

The following excerpts are from talks presented at a Feb. 8 "Zimbabwe: Pan Africanism or Imperialism" forum in Harlem, N.Y. The forum was organized by the December 12th Movement and Friends of Zimbabwe. Go to www.workers.org to read the talks in their entirety.



Amiri Baraka, playwright and poet

How can any Black or anybody who lived through colonialism ever accept anything Britain and the U.S. or any of the European imperialist nations have to say about Africa? How can someone who stole your land and then got put off it, ask for reparations like a thief who steals your wallet and wants you to pay them when you force them to give it back? No matter what is happening in Zimbabwe, Britain and the U.S. must not have anything to say about it. There are criminal charges still pending against them for colonialism, even for slavery. The best they can do is submit to just claims for reparations and hope nobody asks for prison terms. How is it that the greatest murderers and thieves in the world keep getting off without even a dime of reparations, then have the nerve to say that the oppressed peoples, once freed from straight out colonialism, owe them something?



Dr. James McIntosh, Committee to Eliminate Media Offensive to African People

In Zimbabwe, children die for lack of an asthma pump, clean water or IV solution to replace fluids lost from cholera or some other cause of diarrhea. When we realize that under sanctions, shipments of chlorine gas necessary for water purification are blocked, when we realize that under sanctions aircraft parts necessary to repair crop dusters to grow the grain necessary to stop malnutrition are blocked, then we recognize that the imposition of economic sanctions on a developing nation like Zimbabwe is not an alternative to war, but such imposition is itself a weapon of war. Like weapons or even war itself, these sanctions have historically been used for the same purposes. In Zimbabwe the purpose has been to attempt regime change. The first sanctions were the unofficial sanctions in the form of the refusal of credit to Zimbabwe by the IMF [International Monetary Fund] and others. These undeclared and unofficial sanctions were sparked by the reclaiming of the land by the Zimbabwean people. Mugabe, like Malcolm X, recognized that land is the basis of all revolution and that the Zimbabwe revolution must be no dif-



ferent. The response of imperialism to land reclamation is always war.

Monica Moorehead, International Action Center

Historically, sectors of the U.S. left movement have been weak in carrying out a consistent, anti-imperialist perspective, especially where imperialism's interests are the most profound. Therefore, struggles especially in Africa and the Middle East face the most intense political isolation due to racism, chauvinism and social-patriotism, rooted in the ideology of the capitalist ruling class. The movement must explain in popular language to the workers and oppressed in the U.S. that the Wall Street bosses and bankers that are stealing their homes, their apartments, their jobs, their education, their health care—if they even have health care—weakening their unions; that benefit from the divide-and-conquer ideology of racism, including from police brutality to incarcerations to deportations and much more, are the same forces imposing endless economic and military wars and occupations abroad. Our enemy is the same here and worldwide—capitalism and imperialism, not the people of Zimbabwe, Palestine and elsewhere, who are on the front lines in the war for national liberation to get imperialism off their backs. The most effective way to build international solidarity with the people of Zimbabwe is to weaken imperialism at home with the building of an independent, fightback movement to demand real change, which translates into a revolutionary transformation of society that will put human needs before capitalist greed.

Chaka Cousins, All-African People's Revolutionary Party

The struggle that is being played out in Zimbabwe is not just about Zimbabwe. It is a link in the chain of struggle against slavery, against colonialism, neocolonialism, capitalism and imperialism. This struggle will show clearly the forces that are for genuinely fighting for true independence and the forces that seek only to collaborate with imperialism. Imperialism has declared war against Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwean masses because they dare to struggle for genuine independence. The sanctions against Zimbabwe are in fact a maneuver of the neocolonialists. The imperialists can no longer rule directly, so instead they seek to rule through economic control and through puppet leaders.

We are currently witnessing the fall of capitalism. Every day we read about some type of pyramid scheme where the person at the top has stolen the money of those at the bottom. This is precisely how capitalism exploits the masses. Those who don't labor reap and plunder the resources of those who do labor. This system is bound to fail because it is an unjust system, it is an oppressive system, and wherever there is oppression, there will always be resistance.



Professor Molefi Kete Asante, author of "The History of Africa," and a trainer of journalists in Zimbabwe during the first year of the country's independence.

The condition of the Black people in Zimbabwe before the Second Chimurenga [armed struggle] was near slavery. Whites had managed to segregate the country much like South Africa. The wages of the African population averaged about 10 dollars a month, while the whites made 600 dollars a month. It was once reported that the whites in Rhodesia had the highest standard of living in the world. When Mugabe's government began to take the lands and redistribute them to the people, sometimes to the people who had been working the farms for decades anyway, because the land belonged to their ancestors, the reactionaries started a military resistance by arming themselves and some of their collaborators to fight the government. His decision was historic because it was in the interest of the masses of the people. They had to take back the land. They also knew that the white farmers, some who owned 60,000 acres, were producing not food crops, but cash crops to make themselves rich. Who eats tobacco and cotton? Yes, there was maize but most of it was for export anyway. The condition of the people was pitiful in their own land. They were compelled to call for redress. What people would stand by and allow such a small minority to dominate their lives?

Atty. Malik Zulu Shabazz, New Black Panther Party

Today, Britain and America have determined that they will rule Africa through virtual, digital, high speed, automatic remote control, using African leaders that are pre-stamped, pre-qualified and pre-ordained to be good stool pigeons for the West and Western neocolonialism under the guise of "responsible and good governance." Any leader like Robert Mugabe who stands up for justice and righting the wrongs or for reparations is lied upon, slandered, attacked, vilified and his people are made to pay the price through economic and diplomatic sanctions, which are weapons of war by other labels. These are the policies of George W. Bush. These are the policies of Prime Minister Tony Blair. Now, history has vanquished these two men, the people have removed them and cast them off into the dustbin of arrogant rulers who disregarded the rights of smaller nations. The people, Black, Brown, Red, Yellow and White, have removed these two arrogant ones as a sign that their ideas and policies are morally bankrupt and repugnant to the universal ideas of mutual cooperation amongst nations and peoples. With the removal of Bush and Blair, so too must come the removal and dismantling of their policies and ideals, and indeed a change must come. □

'Hands Off Zimbabwe'



The same day that a unity government took office in Zimbabwe, Feb. 13, opponents of Western colonialism protested before the British and U.S. missions to the United Nations in New York City demanding an end to the economic sanctions imposed on this southern African country and the right to self-determination. The December 12th Movement and Friends of Zimbabwe called this action. Speakers at a rally outside the U.S. Mission included D12's Omowale Clay and Sara Flounders from the International Action Center.

Imperialist sanctions have crippled Zimbabwe's economy for almost a decade, ever since the African masses instituted a radical land reform policy of taking back their lands illegally stolen by white farmers. These earlier land thefts date back to the days of British colonialism, starting in the late 19th century. Once Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe backed this grassroots land reform program, the imperialists demonized him with a vengeance.

Mugabe, a leader of the ZANU-PF party coordinating Zimbabwe's liberation struggle, was prime minister from 1980 to 1987, and president since then. Now the ZANU-PF is sharing political power with two opposition parties that are backed by the U.S. and Britain.

One of these parties, the Movement for Democratic Change, nominated their treasurer general, wealthy white farmer Roy Bennett, whose vast land holdings had been seized by Zimbabwe's people, for deputy agriculture minister. When Bennett arrived in Harare Feb. 13, he was arrested and charged for his role in an earlier plot to overthrow President Mugabe. The continuing international sanctions against Zimbabwe and the role of people like Bennett in the opposition to Mugabe indicate once again that Zimbabwe's quest for sovereignty and true independence is far from being over.

—Report & photo by Monica Moorehead

WW PHOTOS: LAL ROOHH

Divestment from Israeli occupation

Hampshire College leads the way

By Lila Goldstein

On Feb. 7, Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) won a significant victory at Hampshire College in Massachusetts when the administration announced it would divest from six companies that directly profit from the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

Over 800 students, professors and alumni signed SJP's "institutional statement" calling for the divestment. After an intense two-year campaign by the student movement, Hampshire became the first college in the United States to divest from the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

The six corporations that Hampshire divested from provide the Israeli military with equipment and services in the Occupied West Bank and Gaza. They are Caterpillar, United Technologies, General Electric, ITT Corporation, Motorola and Terex.

SJP carried out this campaign in response to a call from Palestinians to boycott, divest and sanction as a way of

bringing pressure on the state of Israel to end its violations of international law. So far they have gotten support from many groups and prominent individuals who have endorsed their institutional statement. Among the endorsers are Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, Desmond Tutu, Rashid Khalidi, vice president of the EU Parliament Luisa Morgantini, former member of Congress from Georgia Cynthia McKinney, Ronnie Kasrils, Israeli historian Ilan Pappé, John Berger, Nobel Peace Laureate Mairead Maguire, author Leslie Feinberg and Roger Waters of Pink Floyd.

In 1979 Hampshire paved the way for divestment campaigns across the country as the first school in the country to divest from apartheid South Africa. Now it is the first to divest from the occupation of Palestine.

The students in SJP not only pressured Hampshire to divest from companies directly linked to the Israeli occupation, they also opened up an issue that has too often been silenced in the U.S. Their

actions will hopefully spread to other schools of higher education throughout the U.S.

Shortly after the school divested, school President Ralph Hexter and the head of the board of trustees put out a statement saying the divestment had nothing to do with the political situation in the region. They claimed the school divested because the six particular companies violated Hampshire's responsible investing policy. The administration's attempt to depoliticize this act of divestment is completely transparent.

Distancing themselves from the radical notion of divesting from the Israeli occupation can only do them harm when building new bridges to groups supportive of Palestine, and it will not redeem them in the eyes of the Zionist movement. This is evident from the reaction of Harvard University professor Allan Dershowitz, who threatened to boycott Hampshire College shortly after the divestment statement was released to the press even after Hexter made his distancing statement.

Taking a stance against Israel has never been easy in the U.S. due to the vast amount of support given to the Israeli military by the U.S. government. However, despite the resistance from the administration and parts of the media, this brave act by Hampshire College was met with broad support from campus groups, parents of students and endorsers, who have voiced nothing but positive reinforcement for the divestment.

As a student at Hampshire College and as a member of SJP who has worked for the last two years on this campaign, I hope this small act in our small school will have an impact on other student groups. It shows that resistance and organizing will work and that students can effect change in their schools. I also hope this divestment from Israel's brutal and illegal occupation of Palestine will voice solidarity with the Palestinian people and bring us one step closer to ending the occupation.

The writer is a Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST) organizer.

Movement grows to boycott Israeli products

By Kathy Durkin

Furious at Israel's horrific siege of Gaza and inspired by the courageous people of Gaza, workers, students and progressive activists are organizing sit-ins, demonstrations and other acts of solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Many groups are getting on board and endorsing the Palestinian-led call for an international campaign for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel.

From South Africa, where union dockworkers heroically refused to unload an Israeli ship, to Irish activists, Basque unionists and students in Britain and the United States, momentum is growing in the struggle to cut ties to Israel.

Students across Britain, including Palestinian and Arab youth, have taken direct action and occupied 21 campuses to protest Israel's military assaults on Gaza and to demand their schools end links to the Zionist state and to the British weapons maker BAE Systems, which arms Israel.

In London, students held sit-ins at Goldsmith University and the London School of Economics, among others. Similar protests spread through England to Birmingham, Sussex, Norwich, Warwick, Oxford, Leeds, Cambridge and elsewhere. Some protests have won concessions from university officials.

At Manchester University, 1,000 stu-

dents equated Israel with apartheid-era South Africa and called on the administration and student union to boycott Israeli companies and support Gaza and the BDS movement. The student union agreed.

Strong sit-ins have been held in Scotland at the universities of Dundee, Glasgow, Edinburgh and at Strathclyde.

Other solidarity actions continue. British MP George Galloway and 300 volunteers left Ramsgate Feb. 14 in a 110-vehicle caravan, whose vans, fire truck and ambulances were filled with community-donated food, medicine, clothes and toys to be donated in Gaza. Viva Palestine, Stop the War Coalition, Muslim groups and trade unions organized this 5,000-mile journey.

Irish organizations join BDS campaign

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions, with 600,000 members in 55 unions, is prepared to start a boycott of Israeli goods. The Jan. 31 Irish Times carried a full-page ad, headlined "Irish Call for Justice for Palestine," sponsored by the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign. Its 350 signers called for the Irish government and people to boycott Israeli products and to support the BDS campaign.

When thousands of Irish marchers in Derry commemorated the 37th anniversary of Bloody Sunday—when British sol-

ditioners killed 14 unarmed people in 1972—they carried 1,000 Palestinian flags in tribute to the Palestinians killed by Israeli bombs in Gaza. The names of children killed were posted at the Children's Wall. Sinn Fein's banner read, "Solidarity with People of Gaza, Stop the Blockade."

Welsh activists were arrested in Swansea at a Tesco's grocery store after they seized produce grown on illegally occupied Palestinian land. The media reported their message calling on Wales' people to support a countrywide boycott of Israeli goods.

Demonstrations in more than 30 cities in Basque Country, with 30,000 participants, have called for BDS and linked the Basque and Palestinian struggles. Trade unions joined a Bilbao demonstration calling for a boycott of Israel. Ten municipalities called for breaking ties to Israel.

In Catalonia, protesters leapt onto a basketball court to disrupt a Barcelona-Maccabi (Tel Aviv) game, waving Palestinian flags and signs saying "Boycott Israel."

Professors and university employees in Quebec also endorsed the Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Professors and Employees' call to boycott Israel.

The BDS campaign is growing in the U.S. As Hampshire College students successfully campaigned for school divestment from Israel, a University of Rochester sit-in was organized by Students for a Democratic Society. They demanded no school ties to U.S. and Israeli militarism in the Middle East and aid for Gaza

schools. Iraq Veterans against the War and Rochester Against War took part.

Macalester College students occupied the Minnesota Trade Office in St. Paul last month, then picketed there on Feb. 6, demanding that the state end all trade with Israel.

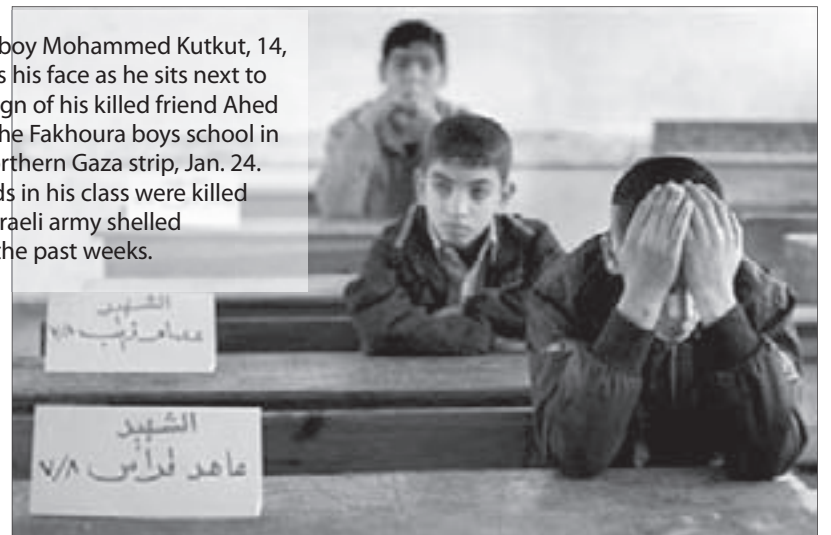
And New York University students began a divestment campaign at their school.

A 24-hour demonstration outside the World Zionist Organization's New York office, from Feb. 12-13, drew 900 Jewish activists. Jews Say No targeted Israel's blockade of Gaza and the ongoing occupation and demanded justice for the Palestinians.

Meanwhile, thousands of e-mail endorsements from the U.S., Canada and worldwide have poured in to the Jews in Solidarity with Palestine campaign. (See IACenter.org)

A cultural boycott is also underway. Chicago protesters wearing bandages stained with red paint, symbolizing Palestinian casualties, recently picketed the Israeli Batsheva Dance Company. The International Solidarity Movement and the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel plan protests wherever the dance company performs.

The Palestinian BDS National Committee has issued an international call for a Global Day of Action in Solidarity with the Palestinian people and for concrete and bold BDS actions on March 30 to make this mobilization "a historic step forward in the new movement." □



Palestinian boy Mohammed Kutkut, 14, right, covers his face as he sits next to the name sign of his killed friend Ahed Qaddas in the Fakhoura boys school in Jebaliya, northern Gaza strip, Jan. 24. Three friends in his class were killed when the Israeli army shelled Jebaliya in the past weeks.

South African workers' solidarity with Palestine

The following statement was sent to WW on Feb. 11.

We, the Palestine Solidarity Committee, believe the action by South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (SATAWU) members in Durban [by refusing to unload an Israeli ship--WW] indicates a new phase in Palestinian solidarity in South Africa. Workers have put international solidarity above their own interests and are determined to persist with this action. This action has also spurred other COSATU unions to consider their roles

within COSATU's Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) call. Commercial workers, for example, are discussing how they might join in. BDS has now become a reality in South Africa, in a manner which will have a real impact on Israeli interests. Palestinian solidarity is the better for it; South Africa is the better for it. We salute the SATAWU members, and all the workers of COSATU for their determined support of the Palestinian people.

—Na'eem Jeenah, spokesperson,
Palestine Solidarity Committee
(PSC), Johannesburg
South Africa



Motherhood, malice & the media

Nadya Suleman, the mother of octuplets born on Jan. 26, immediately ran into a well-orchestrated cacophony of vitriol. Much of the furor has centered on the 33-year-old California woman's mental stability or lack thereof in bringing eight more children into the world on top of the six she already has. All were conceived as a result of fertility treatments.

The right-wing media frenzy had its intended effect: it whipped up outrage centered on this single, unemployed woman of Iraqi descent. It gave the manufacturers of public opinion a diversionary tactic to sideline the real news: the deepening capitalist crisis. The anti-poor, anti-woman bias of the attacks is the real outrage. Suleman has become a scapegoat for those who want to blame the victims as millions are being cast out of their homes and jobs by a full-blown capitalist economic crisis.

It has been reported that Suleman receives \$490 per month in food stamps for the family as well as Social Security disability benefits for three of her first six children. Currently more than 31.5 million people—more than 1 in 10—are receiving federal government food stamps. Food banks across the U.S. have seen a tremendous increase in need along with fewer resources to help people meet their basic nutritional requirements.

In the meantime, as we have reported in these pages, the number of people receiving public assistance checks is at a 40-year low, even as millions of workers lose their jobs and are in dire need of assistance for their survival. Tent cities are growing and more

people are being harassed for trying to live in their vehicles.

Soaring poverty and unemployment take their worst toll on the most vulnerable members of society—children. The media are asking how Suleman will raise her 14 children without a “welfare handout” from the state.

The malicious depictions of Suleman and her children, who have received numerous death threats, are characterized by misogynistic ideas about what a “real woman” should be. The comments of reactionary media pundits—and others who could be called “moderate”—are rife with anti-woman and anti-poor venom. They won't be repeated here.

All women should have the right to bear children if they choose, not just rich women, just as they should also have the right to terminate a pregnancy if they want. It is the legally established duty of the government to provide for those who cannot provide for themselves. Welfare and funding for all social services need to be increased, not cut back to levels that make life a living hell for those in need.

During a time of economic crisis like the one currently engulfing the U.S., it is no surprise that the corporate media have found a diversion to take people's minds off the real travesty occurring in society.

Corporate welfare—and welfare for the banks—has been doled out to the tune of trillions of taxpayers' dollars. This is the real scandal. The workers and oppressed have every right to demand living wage jobs and/or income, along with housing, health care and all of life's necessities, as the capitalist economic crisis worsens. □

People's victory in Venezuela

Marxists consider a vote to be a measure of the political consciousness of the working class and oppressed peoples. In Venezuela, the vote on the referendum Feb. 15 thereby showed that the bulk of the Venezuelan workers and poor approved the government's orientation toward socialism in a time of worldwide capitalist crisis.

Of the 11 million Venezuelans who voted, some six million voted “Yes” and five million voted “No” on a referendum to extend term limits for candidates for national offices. In this case, the vote was another referendum on Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, reversing the narrow

defeat of the constitutional reform in December 2007.

The victory allows the Latin American leader to run for reelection in 2012 for another six years. It affirms Venezuela's direction: to oppose imperialist domination of Latin America and to move toward socialism. It asserts Venezuela's anti-imperialist stance on the world arena.

Chávez has been and continues to be an essential part of that process.

Chávez called the vote “a victory for all the peoples of Latin America.” Within the limits of what any vote can be, in this case the vote is really a victory for all the peoples of the world. □

Free the Cuban 5

Letter to the editor

Speaking of remittances

The U.S. government's hostile laws against Cuba make it hard to send money there even if you have some.

My daughter's sister in Havana has her “quince” (15th birthday celebration) coming up and we decided to help out. At my local Western Union, I filled out one form and then was given another, a Cuba Remittance Affidavit from the Treasury Department. The wording of the form is very telling. Even if Obama changes it, this is what he is tweaking.

First, the total amount allowed is \$300 per payee's household in a 3-month period. This stipulation is repeated three times in a paragraph about Family Household Remittance. Higher sums are allowed only if you check off Emigration [to the U.S.].

The Treasury Department limits who is a family member. You must certify that “no member of the payee's household is a prohibited official of the Government of Cuba or a prohibited member of the Cuban Communist Party.”

While I could send to “my spouse's child,” I assumed that since she is a minor I should send it to her mother. Upon reading my affidavit, the Western Union worker was concerned that “mother of spouse's child” wouldn't work. She told me they will hold the money for the slightest thing, and your family will not be able to get it, at least not until a big pile of new paperwork is done. On her advice I called Western Union and was informed that in Cuba, a person under 18 who shows ID can receive remittances.

While waiting, I read the footnote on the affidavit. “Prohibited officials” include anyone with a leadership position in any ministry or state agency, the council of State, the Committees for Defense of the Revolution, Confederation of Labor of Cuba (CTC) and its component unions; also any member or employee of the National

Assembly of People's Power [elected parliamentary body]; employees of the Ministry of the Interior or Ministry of Defense; any level editors of the state-run media; and members and employees of the Cuban Supreme Court.

Just one of these categories, the Ministry of the Interior, includes numerous job titles from police to immigration clerks to those who inform their neighbors about recycling laws. A huge housing development in Habana del Este houses mostly MININT workers—none of whom, I now see, could legally get money wired from U.S. relatives.

Reading further, “Prohibited members of the Cuban Communist Party” includes members of the Politburo, the Central Committee, and so on down to secretaries of the provincial Party central committees. At times I have heard Cubans say that the leadership sacrifices more than the masses, and now I understand one aspect of that statement.

Back at the window with a new affidavit naming my stepdaughter, we tried again. When the worker had me proofread her typing, I noticed a capital C where there should have been a G. She called to reverse the payment she had just entered, and rewrote a third form herself. She feared that my money could end up just sitting there due to a one-letter mismatch.

This process took so long that I read a few chapters in a book, while a man swept the floor. Recalling that her co-worker is Cuban, the agent joked with him that she might send him back along with the money. He responded seriously, “The way things are going, I would be ‘más tranquilo’ (calmer) there than here.” For example, he mentioned, in Cuba health care is free and people are not kicked out of their jobs.

—Sara C.
New York

Canada deports U.S. war resister

By Dee Knight

U.S. war resister Cliff Cornell surrendered to U.S. border police on Feb. 4 after being ordered to leave Canada. He was promptly arrested for being AWOL from the U.S. Army and was hauled off to the Whatcom County Jail in Bellingham, Wash., 20 miles south of the U.S.-Canada border.

Cornell's attorney and supporters expressed outrage at the arrest. “Clifford Cornell came back to the United States so that he could voluntarily return to his old unit at Fort Stewart,” said attorney James Branum. “He stated this intention to the Border Patrol, both verbally and in writing. ... I am disappointed that the Border Patrol chose to arrest my client and place him in a county jail. ... This should not have happened.”

Branum won the battle for Cornell to go to Fort Stewart on his own. The soldier boarded a bus from Seattle to Fort Stewart on Feb. 7, meeting Branum there on Feb. 9. He is expected to face court martial.

Cornell, 28, left for Canada four years ago after his Army artillery unit was ordered to Iraq. Despite a popular outcry to provide sanctuary to soldiers who refuse to fight in illegal wars, Canada's Conservative government is pressing ahead with deportations.

“Cliff Cornell should not be going to jail,” said Gerry Condon, director of Project Safe Haven, a war resister advocacy group. “He had the guts to follow his conscience and obey international law. President Obama should grant amnesty to Cliff Cornell and all war resisters.”

Cornell follows Robin Long, who was deported from Canada in July and is now serving a 15-month prison sentence at Miramar Naval Brig near San Diego. Long was also jailed in Bellingham after being hauled across the Canada-U.S. border.

“We want Bellingham to be a sanctuary city for war resisters,” said Gene Marx of Bellingham

Veterans For Peace, “not a way station for war resisters being sent to prison.”

Vets for Peace push for sanctuary city

Bellingham is known for being a progressive city. Its City Council has passed two anti-war resolutions recently. The Whatcom Peace and Justice Center held a public vigil in support of Cliff Cornell outside of the county jail on Feb. 5.

Chris Teske, a former U.S. Army paratrooper and infantryman who refused recall to Iraq after serving two tours in Afghanistan, also returned to the U.S. from Canada in late January following deportation orders. He was not arrested, and is currently consulting legal counsel to turn himself in, according to Sarah Lazar of Courage To Resist. “It seems as hard as I try to forget the institution which enslaved me, they have not forgotten about me,” Teske said.

To see more information on Cornell's defense or to read a new organizing paper, “Resisting Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) recall,” see www.couragetoresist.org.

Lazar wrote that three other resisters—Kimberly Rivera, Patrick Hart and Dean Walcott—were ordered to leave Canada in recent weeks. They appealed through the Canadian judicial system and won temporary stays. This will delay deportation a few months and could possibly lead to successful appeals.

Several more war resisters—including Jeremy Hinzman, Joshua Key and Matt Lowell—have been fighting deportation orders for months and have thus far avoided deportation. In a remarkable legal victory, a federal court in Canada rejected the Immigration and Refugee Board's reasons for denying refugee status to Joshua Key and ordered a new hearing.

Some 64 percent of Canadians favor granting U.S. war resisters permanent residency, leaving Canada as a viable option for U.S. resisters despite the stance of the current Canadian government. □

GADELOUPE, MARTINIQUE

General strike hits France's Caribbean possessions

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Trade union actions starting in January have brought Guadeloupe, a French colony in the Caribbean, to a standstill. The underlying reasons for the work stoppage stem from the global economic crisis and the total political control of Guadeloupe by the French imperialist state under the leadership of the rightist president, Nicholas Sarkozy.

The strike began on Jan. 20 amid rising prices and worsening living conditions among the people on this island located some 370 miles southeast of the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Guadeloupe's largest city, Pointe-a-Pitre, is 4,200 miles from Paris, France.

On Feb. 14, the leader of the Collective Against Exploitation (LKP), a coalition of unions and political parties that have carried out the strike, accused the French government of sending riot police to Guadeloupe in order to assassinate its organizers.

"Today given the number of gendarmes who have arrived in Guadeloupe armed to the teeth, the French state has chosen its natural path: to kill Guadeloupeans as usual," says LKP leader Elie Domota, who is also secretary general of the General Union of Guadeloupe Workers (UGTG).

Domota's statement came as French police units stood guard against striking workers to force the re-opening of petrol stations and supermarkets. The workers have demanded that escalating fuel and food prices be lowered. The French government conceded to some of these demands and utilized these concessions to justify the reopening of the gas stations and food stores.

Citing the historic role of France in maintaining political and economic control of the tropical islands, Domota said, "Every time there have been demonstrations in Guadeloupe to demand pay rises, the response of the state has been repression, notably in May 1967 in Pointe-a-Pitre, where there were 100 deaths of building workers massacred by the gendarmes."

On Feb. 14, thousands of workers demonstrated in the town of Le Moule. The marchers walked through the area chanting, "Guadeloupe is ours! It's not theirs!"

This slogan, of course, relates to the economic dominance of the white French minority known as "Bekes." It is this class of the population—along with French imperialism—that exercises effective control over the more than 400,000 African descendants whose ancestors were enslaved and brought to the islands during 18th and 19th centuries.

Social apartheid in the French colony

A French member of parliament from the overseas department of French Guiana on the South American continent said on Feb. 15 that the conditions in Guadeloupe are "not far from social apartheid." In an interview with *Le Journal du Dimanche*, Christine Taubira stated, "The leaders of the LKP are not anti-white racists. They are exposing a reality ... a caste holds economic power and abuses it."

The Guadeloupe strike has closed most shops, restaurants, schools, banks and government offices. The Sarkozy regime has adamantly refused to grant the majority of the demands of the LKP, one of which consists of a 200 Euro monthly raise (\$259).

In neighboring Martinique, work-



In Martinique, thousands of Black protesters marched Feb. 13 through the capital, chanting slogans against the descendants of colonizers and slave holders, who comprise only 1 percent of the population but control the economy. "Martinique is ours, not theirs!" they chanted.

ers have joined their counterparts in Guadeloupe in a general strike beginning on Feb. 5.

A Feb. 10 Associated Press article highlights the mass demonstrations and work stoppages in Martinique: "University students and artisans in the French Caribbean island of Martinique are protesting the high cost of living.

"All major commercial centers, gas stations and businesses remained closed on Tuesday (Feb. 10) as the protest entered its sixth day. Government officials have met with protesters, who demand a 30-percent overall reduction in prices. Union leaders have said they would agree to a 10-percent reduction among some products. No agreement has been reached.

"Police have said that 11,000 protesters crowded the streets of Martinique's capital [Fort-de-France]. Union leaders say it was more than double that number."

In Guadeloupe 47 trade unions, associations and political parties have refused to work and attend schools since Jan. 20. A demonstration Jan. 24 drew 25,000 people.

Some of the 146 demands put forward by the LKP include the reduction of fuel prices by 50 percent, the lowering of prices for transport services and water, an immediate freeze on rents, more job security for temporary employees, greater educational opportunities for youth and an end to racism in employment practices.

Guadeloupe has been a French colony since 1812. Although the island was ostensibly integrated into the French state after World War II in 1946, the country has remained in poverty.

Unemployment stands officially at 23 percent and the prices of necessities are anywhere between 30 and 60 percent higher than what prevails in France.

The French Socialist Party dominates the local council that governs Guadeloupe. Even though the PS is in opposition to the Sarkozy government, it has offered no real solidarity for Guadeloupe's workers.

Cynthia McKinney expresses solidarity

From the United States, former congresswoman from Georgia and Green Party candidate for president in 2008, Cynthia McKinney, issued a Feb. 7 statement of support to Guadeloupe's workers.

McKinney said in part, "I call on the authorities in Guadeloupe and in France to heed the workers' and people's just

demands—and I urge the authorities to refrain from using any form of intimidation, pressure or repression against this powerful movement."

The former congressperson continued by pointing out, "The eyes of the world are focused on Guadeloupe. Israel has shown the world that the massive use of force does not ensure victory. Indeed, it is counterproductive."

McKinney also said: "Any use of force by the authorities against people exer-

cising their rights is not acceptable. It is not by repression and the deployment of police and shock troops that a solution will be found."

The need for international solidarity

While the one-day strike by workers in France on Jan. 29 received some media coverage in the U.S., the events in Guadeloupe and Martinique have gone largely uncovered by the corporate-controlled media. Both of these actions represent the workers' response to the burgeoning economic crisis engendered by capitalist overproduction.

Legally, Guadeloupe and Martinique are overseas departments of France; their citizens are French citizens who elect representatives to the French Parliament. But both of these territories are still subjected to colonial rule and its concomitant exploitation of labor as well as institutional racism. The peoples of Guadeloupe and Martinique have an inherent right to self-determination and national independence, just as Puerto Rico does with respect to U.S. imperialism.

Despite the disadvantaged conditions that the masses in Guadeloupe are struggling against, they are pointing the way for the coming struggles of working-class people throughout the capitalist world. The building of a united front, the coming together of trade unions and peoples' organizations is key in any process aimed at fighting against the current crisis in world capitalism. □

U.S. failures in Kabul

By G. Dunkel

U.S. policy towards Afghanistan is undergoing a major re-evaluation, since its major local ally and its occupation forces are both showing glaring weaknesses.

The U.S. media are using direct criticism to undercut Afghan President Hamed Karzai, who used to have Washington's unwavering support. In a Feb. 15 report on MSNBC, reporter Richard Engel now calls Karzai "corrupt, tied to the opium trade and unable to stop the Taliban."

U.S. special envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan, Richard Holbrooke, met with Karzai only at the end of his four-day visit, which the local Afghan press interpreted as a significant slight. A comment on Tolo TV, an independent Kabul station, points out, "At a time when President Hamed Karzai has adopted a harsher tone than before in his criticism of civilian casualties in foreign military operations, officials of the Obama administration are describing the Afghan administration as the weakest government." (BBC Monitoring Service, Feb. 14)

Holbrooke avoided endorsing Karzai in the Afghan national elections scheduled for this coming summer.

To maintain support among Afghans, Karzai criticized U.S. military tactics when the Pentagon's attacks devastated wedding parties and recklessly killed large numbers of children and other civilians.

Bold attacks by the resistance against the Justice Department, the offices in charge of prisons and the Education Ministry, carried out Feb. 12 on the eve of Holbrooke's visit, exposed the weakness of the Karzai regime. The Taliban said these attacks were in retaliation for the "mistreatment and torture of Taliban prisoners," according to the Feb. 12 New

York Times.

Five resistance fighters killed the two guards at the Justice Ministry and then seized three of its four floors in coordination with the attacks on the offices running the prisons and the Education Ministry. At the prison offices, one of the attackers exploded a suicide belt and the others used this distraction to get into the building.

A video clip on NBC news showed that the building suffered major explosive damage, while the resistance fighters roamed the halls, killing 20 and wounding more than 50 government personnel. These buildings are all in downtown Kabul, one within a few blocks of Karzai's presidential palace.

During the press conference the army held to announce it had cleared the Justice building, it revealed that one of the resistance fighters was still alive.

Since there have been other armed attacks in Kabul, some questions must be going through the minds of the U.S. military commanders in Afghanistan: Why were there only two guards at the Justice Ministry? How could the Taliban transport such a major amount of weapons and explosives into Kabul without being reported? Why didn't the Afghan rapid response force respond more rapidly?

Faced with these weaknesses, Washington is reportedly preparing a plan to send 30,000 more U.S. troops to Afghanistan and request more allied troops. President Barack Obama will present this plan to NATO at a meeting during NATO's 60th anniversary commemoration this April 2-5 in Strasbourg, France.

European anti-war organizations plan protests at the NATO celebration, including opposition to the sending of more NATO troops to Afghanistan. □

¡Libertad para Leonard Peltier!

El 6 de febrero fue el 33er aniversario del arresto del prisionero político indígena Leonard Peltier.

Peltier, un participante del Movimiento Indio Americano, fue erróneamente condenado en 1976 por el asesinato de dos agentes del Buró Federal de Investigaciones (FBI) en medio de una balacera en la Reservación India de Pine Ridge. Por 33 años Peltier ha languidecido en varias prisiones, a pesar de revelaciones de testimonios forzados, fabricados y evidencias ocultadas y de que oficiales federales hayan declarado que no saben quién disparó o qué papel tuvo Peltier. Peltier, quien fue encarcelado a la edad de 31 años, tiene hoy 64 años y sufre de diabetes.

A pesar de su encarcelamiento, Peltier nunca ha titubeado en la lucha por los derechos de l@s indígenas, por su propia libertad y por el fin a la opresión y represión racista a manos de las sucesivas administraciones estadounidenses. En una declaración de solidaridad para el prisionero político Mumia Abu-Jamal en abril del año pasado, Peltier escribió: "Nosotros somos el Movimiento Indio Americano,

somos los Panteras Negras, somos MOVE, somos los Viet Cong, somos el Ejército Republicano Irlandés y la Organización para la Liberación de Palestina. Somos cada hombre, mujer y niño que desea ver el alba en una tierra de libertad y oportunidad, una tierra de abundancia y sin hambre, una tierra de opciones sin temor, una tierra de progreso sin brutalidad." (philly-imc.org, 21 de abril)

El montaje contra Peltier refleja el de much@s otr@s prisioner@s polític@s, líderes o participantes en las luchas por la liberación de sus pueblos y que son acusad@s de asesinar a oficiales de la policía o agentes del FBI, y luego reciben juicios injustos donde las evidencias son sospechosas y todo está en su contra. Una vez se ha escogido a la víctima, los agentes del estado son implacables en sus intentos de mantener a l@s prisioner@s encerrad@s, sin importar cualquier evidencia que surja que pudiera comprobar su inocencia.

Los recientes ataques contra Peltier confirman la crueldad del estado. Peltier, quien siempre ha sido un prisionero mod-

elo, fue recientemente golpeado durante su transferencia a la Prisión Federal Canaán en Pensilvania, un ataque que muchos sospechan ha sido preparado por los oficiales de la prisión para descalificarle cuando él se presente a la junta de libertad condicional este año. Sólo luego de que muchas personas protestaran por este ataque, fue que regresaron a Peltier a la Penitenciaría de Lewisburg.

En un mensaje dirigido al nuevo presidente Barack Obama, la candidata presidencial por el Partido Verde en el 2008, Cynthia McKinney urgió: "Peltier debe ser liberado. Él se ha convertido en un símbolo de injusticia y abuso en las prisiones."

McKinney concluyó: "Una paz verdadera y duradera solo llegará con la justicia. Liberar a nuestr@s prisioner@s polític@s, incluyendo a Peltier, Mumia, Sundiata [Acoli], Imam El-Amin, y nuestr@s prisioner@s polític@s puertorriqueñ@s, y tod@s l@s demás, es sólo un primer pago en el camino hacia la justicia y la reconciliación."

¡Libertad para Peltier y tod@s l@s prisioner@s polític@s!



Nueva constitución gana el voto popular en referendo de Bolivia

Por Donna Lazarus

Dos millones de bolivian@s votaron en el referendo nacional el 25 de enero. Aproximadamente 1,3 millones de los 2 millones de votantes —casi un 62 por ciento— votaron para aprobar la nueva constitución. Este nuevo documento tomó dos años para desarrollarlo en un marco legal que revoca siglos de opresión de las masas marginadas de Bolivia. Con sus 500 artículos, la constitución establece reglas para reconocer a los oprimidos pueblos indígenas de Bolivia y ofrecerles tener voz en decidir su futuro.

Las leyes bolivianas prohíben el tráfico vehicular en los días de comicios para evitar que nadie vote más de una sola vez. L@s 1,3 millones llegaron a las urnas a pie o en burros para votar por la nueva constitución y celebrar su triunfo.

Gritos de aprobación, fuegos artificiales y dinamita (la expresión boliviana de solidaridad de parte de los mineros del estaño) saludaron al Presidente Evo Morales cuando apareció en el balcón del palacio presidencial. En esta ocasión trascendental en la historia de Bolivia, Morales saludó a los miles que llenaron la Plaza de Murillo esa noche en la capital, La Paz, diciendo, "Aquí se refunda una nueva Bolivia con igualdad de oportunidades para todos los bolivianos y bolivianas. Romperemos las cadenas de la discriminación, segregación, subordinación, colonialismo, y humillación." (NACLA, Enero. 27)

Morales continuó diciendo: "Quiero que sepan algo: el estado colonial termina aquí. El colonialismo interno y externo termina aquí. Hermanos y hermanas, el neocolonialismo termina aquí también." El presidente se refería a las políticas de su predecesor, Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, conocido como Goni, quien estaba dispuesto a vender los ricos recursos naturales de Bolivia a bajo costo para los com-



pradores extranjeros. La violencia de Goni contra las masas bolivianas que defendían el país contra la explotación, asesinó a 80 trabajadores y campesinos. Cuando l@s bolivian@s se levantaron, Goni se vio forzado a salir del país en el 2003, y se instaló en la Florida. Bolivia está tratando de extraditarlo para juzgarlo por crímenes cometidos contra el pueblo boliviano.

Campesin@s apoyan la constitución

L@s campesin@s en el campo votaron abrumadoramente apoyando la constitución, que ganó en cinco de los nueve departamentos de Bolivia, incluso en Chuquiaca cuya capital, Sucre, había sido el centro de oposición contra Morales y su Partido, el Movimiento Al Socialismo (MAS).

El campesinado indígena siente especial resentimiento por la falta de apoyo de la clase capitalista y capas medias urbanas. L@s campesin@s piensan que las ciudades se morirían de hambre sin ell@s, y por eso deberían ser reconocid@s por alimentar el país.

La constitución perdió en los departamentos ricos del sector este de Pando, Santa Cruz, Beni y Tarija, donde ha habido oposición violenta y organizada hacia las políticas del MAS y en donde los políticos gobernantes han llamado a la secesión.

Pero aún en esta región conocida como la Media Luna, 41 por ciento en Pando, 35 por ciento en Santa Cruz, y 43 por ciento en Tarija votaron por la nueva constitución. (Cambio, 28 de enero)

La nueva constitución plantea que los servicios básicos como agua, alcantarillado, gas y luz son derechos humanos, al igual que la educación y el cuidado de salud. Reconoce la comunidad afro-boliviana y 36 grupos indígenas y sus tradiciones lingüísticas, y estipula la auto-gobernación en tierras tradicionalmente habitadas por esas comunidades. El Artículo 5 promete el uso de "por lo menos dos idiomas oficiales, uno de los cuales debe ser el español y el otro será escogido tomando en cuenta el uso, conveniencia, circunstancias, necesidades y preferencias de la población." (NACLA, 27 de enero)

En reconocimiento de las tradiciones espirituales y religiosas de muchos de los grupos indígenas, la constitución reconoce la diosa indígena de la tierra, la Pachamama. La disposición sobre la libertad de religión afirma la separación del estado y la iglesia.

La oposición derechista a Morales organizó una campaña contra el artículo que plantea la libertad de religión, aseverando que disminuye el poder de la iglesia católica en Bolivia. Morales, a su vez, ha aseverado que la iglesia católica ha simpatizado con los terratenientes ricos de Santa Cruz, y ha tratado de retornar a los tiempos feudales del siglo pasado.

El Artículo 14, párrafo 11 dice, "El Estado prohíbe y castiga toda forma de discriminación basada en la orientación sexual e identidad de género," haciendo que Bolivia sea uno de los primeros países en incluir la identidad de género como parte de su constitución.

La derecha ha movilizado un ataque con carteleras y anuncios en los medios diciendo que los matrimonios de homo-

sexuales abundarían y socavarían la sociedad boliviana. La nueva constitución, sin embargo, no menciona el derecho de la mujer a tener un aborto.

La nueva constitución también prohíbe la creación de bases militares estadounidenses en Bolivia. El embajador estadounidense a Bolivia recientemente se salió descortésmente de una reunión en La Paz cuando Morales estaba dando un discurso sobre la nueva constitución.

Las masas bolivianas también votaron por un límite de 5.000 hectáreas en la tenencia de tierras en zonas rurales.

En Bolivia, sólo 100 familias son dueñas de 25 millones de hectáreas. Dos millones de campesin@s tienen acceso a sólo 5 millones de hectáreas; haciendo de Bolivia, uno de los países más pobres del mundo, uno con la concentración más alta de tierras en manos del número más bajo de terratenientes. (ipsnews.net)

En respuesta a la prensa abiertamente reaccionaria en Bolivia, el MAS ha fundado su propio periódico, Cambio, cuya primera edición fue publicada el 22 de enero. Morales dijo que Bolivia está preparándose para que la verdad sea sabida por las masas bolivianas y que este periódico "no va a humillar a nadie, sino que nos informará y educará." (ipsnews.net)

Otro acontecimiento reciente en Bolivia fue la expulsión en enero del embajador israelí a Bolivia como protesta contra el bombardeo y las masacres israelíes en Gaza.

El 7 de febrero hubo una celebración de la nueva constitución en El Alto, auspiciada por el gobierno y los sindicatos. El Alto es la ciudad indígena en el Altiplano de La Paz, donde viven 650.000 de las 9 millones de personas en Bolivia. El Alto es conocido por su resistencia al gobierno burgués de Goni y por el sacrificio de much@s de sus habitantes en la lucha contra las políticas neoliberales. □