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# MTA bosses force shutdown Transit workers strike for dignity

By Milt Neidenberg  
New York

Dec. 20 —The strike is on. At 3 a.m. on Dec. 20, 34,000 members of Local 100, Transport Workers Union, fired-up and resolute, walked off their jobs.

Earlier, President Roger Toussaint had rejected the Metropolitan Transit Authority's "final" offer and then convened a TWU executive board meeting. A majority voted to strike. A much smaller group opposed the strike under the influence of the International TWU bureaucracy.

After the strike vote, Local 100 leaders instructed their elected officers, stewards and rank and file to proceed to pre-planned picket lines. Public transit in New York City, the center of finance capital, was shut down.

In spite of the major holiday season, the MTA provoked this costly shutdown. MTA chairperson Peter Kalikow, Gov. George Pataki and Mayor Michael Bloomberg, blinded by their sense of power, had refused to bargain in good faith. Throughout the negotiations they threatened the transit union with the repressive, anti-union Taylor Law, but they miscalculated the anger of the rank and file.

The fury against these servants of the ruling class—who are racist, pompous and arrogant—was clearly evident hours before the strike. Thousands of trade unionists from every major union in the city converged on Governor Pataki's office in midtown Manhattan. With speeches, placards and chants, they sent a powerful message that the labor movement was ready to back up the decision of TWU Local 100 to shut the city down. It was an awesome display of union power.

Hours later, the transit workers had exercised their righteous democratic right to withhold their labor power. Hundreds of trains and buses stood empty.

A citywide shutdown, not seen for 25 years, could be the catalyst to push back the repressive, anti-union racist climate

## TWU under siege

**Dec. 21** — Thirty-four thousand rank and file members of TWU Local 100 are under siege. The union is being fined \$1 million a day. Members are losing two days' pay for each day of the strike. Billionaire Mayor Bloomberg, who has called the members "thugs," is seeking a temporary court injunction charging the union with "criminal contempt."

If the judge agrees, the TWU leaders could be jailed and additional fines added of \$25,000 a day on each member. The judge also fined two Queens TWU locals—Local 726 at \$50,000 a day and Local 1056 at \$75,000 a day for going on strike earlier. Both unions work for private sector bus companies and are not subject to the anti-union Taylor Law. —M.N.



Continued on page 4



TWU workers' protest in front of Gov. Pataki's office Dec. 19.

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

# House panel passes anti-immigrant bill

By Teresa Gutierrez

The House Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives approved a Dec. 15 bill on immigration policy, the Border Security Act of 2005, that if made into law would become the harshest measure to date against undocumented workers.

The bill, H.R. 4437, was sponsored by the committee's chairperson, Rep. F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr. (Republican-Wisconsin), and by the Homeland Security Committee Chair, Rep. Peter King (Republican-New York).

One of the most draconian and repressive features of the bill would make it a federal crime to live in the United States without correct documentation.

The provision would cruelly turn millions of undocumented workers into felons and force immigrants further and further underground.

The bill also broadens the "immigrant-smuggling statute" and punishes anyone who offers support or aid to undocumented families. This means that social service agencies, church groups or immigrant rights activists could be imprisoned for offering support to immigrant workers.

The National Council of La Raza, a Latin@ civil rights group, said the bill's definition of "smuggling and harboring" undocumented workers is so broad that if a member of a church group found an immigrant dying of thirst in the desert and took him or her to a hospital, church members could be subject to criminal penalties.

The bill would require that undocumented workers of non-Mexican background apprehended in the U.S. be held in detention facilities until they are deported; increase funding for sheriffs in border states; giving them more leeway to arrest immigrants, and tough penalties for bosses who hire undocumented workers.

The bill requires that the Department of Homeland Security expand greatly the system intended to verify the immigration status of all workers in the country.

In addition, it authorizes the DHS to build five fences along 698 miles of the U.S./Mexico border, incorporating more high-tech equipment, such as sensors, radar, satellites, and unstaffed drones.

The measure is being touted as one of the "toughest border security measures in more than a decade." The Senate is expected to act on an immigration bill early next year.

## Behind the hype

Immigrant workers, especially undocumented workers, are a cornerstone of the capitalist economy. There is no doubt that without the labor, cheap and super-exploitable, of immigrant workers, this country would grind to a halt in a New York minute.

Immigrant labor is needed to pick the crops, deliver the food and trim the lawns and shrubbery.

On the very same day these harsh measures were approved, the Center for the Continuing Study of the

California Economy, an independent and mainstream think-tank in Palo Alto, issued a report to California.

California, given its location near the Mexican border and its historic significance, is one of the states where the immigration debate is the most heated. More Mexicans live in Los Angeles than in any other city outside of Mexico and is home to a diverse group of immigrants from around the world, including Central Asia, the report says.

There are an estimated 2.4 million undocumented immigrants in California today.

One of the report's principal findings is that, "Immigration, legal or illegal, while imposing net fiscal costs on this state, produces a net economic benefit for the country." It repudiates "that there are wide pockets of poverty and imbalance in the California economy due to immigrants."

It documented how immigrants have nothing to do with displacing jobs for U.S. born workers, filling the lowest-waged jobs.

Last spring, an owner of a small employment agency that caters to finding workers for New York's many diners, said in an interview in the New York Times, "If these illegals leave New York City, New York will die. I know."

The findings that immigrants are central to the U.S. economy are not new. Immigrants have been key to the capitalist economy in this country from its inception.

The measure passed Dec. 15 in the House is not meant to keep out the undocumented. It is not meant to turn the desperately needed wage slaves into felons, although it may do that. After all, the undocumented are still needed to clean up the toxic waste in New Orleans and other parts of the Gulf Coast following Hurricanes Katrina and Wilma.

The measures and the increased witch hunt against immigrants sweeping this country are meant to drive immigrants further underground so they can be exploited further, as witnessed by the encouragement and legitimization of vigilantes such as the Minutemen. They are meant to whip up a xenophobic and racist anti-worker hysteria, a diversion from the real problems all workers face in this country. It is meant to divide U.S.-born and foreign-born workers whose common enemy are the bosses, not each other.

One of the strongest supporters of the measure was the United States Chamber of Commerce, an important part of the capitalist class. According to the New York Times, letters from the Chamber warned lawmakers that it "would penalize any legislator who voted for the rule."

But by pushing immigrants further underground, their labor can be further exploited, an action the Chamber fervently supports.

The solution to repressive measures criminalizing the most oppressed workers is solidarity. Organizing foreign-and U.S.-born workers together in solidarity against the capitalist bosses will beat back this anti-worker offensive. □



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# The politics behind the legal lynching of Tookie Williams

By Abayomi Azikiwe

*Following are excerpts from a Dec. 15 Pan African News Wire column.*

The execution of Stanley Tookie Williams by the State of California on Dec. 13 was a well planned and politically calculated action by the ruling elites in the United States. Despite the fact that the initial trial that convicted Williams was fraught with errors and constitutional violations, the court system refused to grant him a new trial.

The denial of clemency by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger was based on his right-wing politics and his close links with the Bush administration. Bush, a former governor of Texas, a state that has carried out more executions over the last three decades than any other in the country, is a staunch supporter of capital punishment. Bush put more people to death than any other governor in the United States.

Executing Williams provided the right

wing with an opportunity to shore up its political base, which has been shaken by the failing fortunes of the Bush administration over the disastrous defeats in Iraq as well as the growing economic crisis in America.

The response of Schwarzenegger to the request for clemency by Williams' legal team illustrates clearly his disdain for the liberation movements of African and oppressed peoples both in the United States and internationally. Towards the end of the five-page document he cites Williams' dedication of his first book to revolutionary leaders in the African and Indigenous world as the basis for his denial. This document can be read in full by clicking on the URL below: 5-page PDF of the Governor's decision: <http://www.latimes.com/media/acrobat/2005-12/20933940.pdf>

What was most striking about the denial was the section quoted below: "The dedication of Williams' book, 'Life in Prison' casts significant doubt on his per-

sonal redemption. This book was published in 1998, several years after Williams' claimed redemptive experience. Specifically, the book is dedicated to 'Nelson Mandela, Angela Davis, Malcolm X, Assata Shakur, Geronimo Ji Jaga Pratt, Ramona Africa, John Africa, Leonard Peltier, Dhoruba Al-Mujahid, George Jackson, Mumia Abu-Jamal, and the countless other men, women, and youths who have to endure the hellish oppression of living behind bars.' The mix of individuals on this list is curious. Most have violent pasts and some have been convicted of committing heinous murders, including the killing of law enforcement."

"But the inclusion of George Jackson on this list defies reason and is a significant indicator that Williams is not reformed and that he still sees violence and lawlessness as a legitimate means to address societal problems." {Jackson, a Black Panther leader and author of the book, "Soledad Brother", was murdered by prison guards at San Quentin prison in 1971.}



Tookie Williams

Consequently, this was a deliberate act of murder committed before the eyes of the world and specifically targeted at the right wing to win their lagging support and at the oppressed peoples of the United States and the world as a gesture of contempt, hatred and provocation.

However, the actions of Schwarzenegger and his political class has further exposed the true character of the ruling class in America. People have condemned this lynching throughout the United States and the world. It has galvanized a broad coalition in opposition to the racist death penalty and has intensified the debate over capital punishment and the genuine character of the American national security state.

*The writer is the editor of the Pan African News Wire based at Wayne State University in Detroit.*

# A week at a volunteer medical clinic in New Orleans

By Ellen Catalinotto

*Nurse-midwife Catalinotto provided volunteer medical care in New Orleans from Dec. 6 to 13.*

The Common Ground Clinic operates out of a mosque in Algiers, a mostly African American neighborhood of New Orleans on the unflooded West Bank of the Mississippi River. Community activist and former Black Panther Malik Rahim had set up the clinic on Sept. 9, just 10 days after Hurricane Katrina struck.

With space, labor and supplies donated, the clinic reports that it has been able in three months to treat 10,000 patients at the mosque, satellite clinics around the city and in home visits. All care is free for the patients, who often make voluntary contributions.

With no billing or insurance forms to be filled out, paperwork is minimal: providers write down vital signs and a few notes. Total real cost is about \$1 per visit. The volunteer staff has numbered 200 since September, some staying a few days, some for the duration.

For now, FEMA pays for prescriptions marked "Shelter eligible," but that is set to expire Jan. 11, as will the eased rules allowing out-of-state doctors and nurses to be licensed to practice.

"Solidarity not charity" is the clinic's motto. A week at a clinic offering essential health services for the community provides an up close personal contact with the problems of poverty and racism faced both pre-and post-Katrina.

In one large room, about 20 by 30 feet, are the clinic's front desk, often staffed by neighborhood volunteers, tables where nurses triage the patients and take their blood pressure and vital signs, several areas partitioned by shelving or sheets where patients get shots or consult with the doctor, and two massage/examining tables behind curtains. Tarps protect the mosque floor from the heavy traffic and dirt on people's shoes.

In the early days after the hurricane, people, abandoned by federal and local authorities, came to the clinic for medicine

and basic first aid. During Dec. 7-13 about 70 patients came in each a day, half of the rate in September.

By December, most visits were for tetanus, hepatitis and flu vaccines, renewal of prescriptions for chronic diseases—especially high blood pressure, heart disease, and diabetes—or illnesses like coughs, colds and asthma. All patients get their blood pressure checked and can have a blood sugar test with immediate results if they have or are at risk for diabetes.

In addition to medical services, the Common Ground Clinic offers patients a whole range of alternative therapies from herbs and Reiki to acupuncture and massage, either to treat illness and pain or to reduce the stress and tension caused by the disaster. Nutrition classes are also offered. While patients wait to be seen, social work-

Ellen Catalinotto and Malik Rahim, Common Ground Collective leader in New Orleans FEMA dining hall.



ers often sit and talk with them to assess any need for mental health services.

## High blood pressure, high toxicity

The clinic finds that high blood pressure is common, even among people who had never before been diagnosed with this disease. Had this ailment been overlooked before Katrina or developed since?

A satellite clinic run at a church mainly treats immigrant men from Central America. These young workers had normal blood pressure, but suffered colds, coughs, allergies and rashes and needed vaccinations. Working in cleanup and construction, they are exposed to dirty and dangerous condi-

*Continued on page 5*

# High school students hold back challenge to equality

By Cheryl LaBash  
Detroit

Hundreds of Detroit high school students conducted a political science lesson on Dec. 14. Traveling two hours to the Michigan capital in Lansing, the mostly African American youths blocked an anti-affirmative-action proposal from the 2006 statewide election. Their militant, foot-stomping and chanting determination to defend equal opportunity won the day, preventing the Board of State canvassers from rubberstamping the racist proposal as the canvassers were ordered to do by the Michigan Court of Appeals.

At issue is the deceptively titled "Michigan Civil Rights Initiative." Modeled after the California Proposal 209 passed in 1998, it aims to eliminate any program that increases opportunities for women and people of color—including recruitment, training and outreach programs in education, jobs and contracting,

apprenticeships, summer jobs and fair housing. ([www.oneunitedmichigan.org](http://www.oneunitedmichigan.org))

The deception is not only in the title. Paid circulators obtained signatures by misleading signers into thinking they were supporting affirmative action. At the Detroit Labor Day parade in 2004 workers followed the fraudulent petitioners to challenge false presentations.

Despite testimony of affirmative action supporters tricked into signing these petitions, the courts are using the weight of legality to roll back hard-won, real civil rights advances. The appeals court decision ruled the board of canvassers had no right to determine whether or not fraud was involved, only if sufficient signatures were gathered.

Chanting, "They say Jim Crow, we say hell no!" the youth refused to be fooled by the court order. Jim Crow laws legalized discrimination against African Americans. It was right to break Jim Crow laws.

Asia Armstrong, student protestor, said, "It threatens my chance to go to col-

lege. I work very hard in high school to go to college; they are not going to take this away from me. I'm not going to let that happen; that's why I am here. We've seen how it is in California, and how there's no more affirmative action, it's not good. I do still think we have a chance and a hope for Detroit and Michigan."

The two members of the board of canvassers who abstained or voted against placing the racist proposal on the ballot may face contempt-of-court sanctions. Or the courts may attempt to bypass the canvassers and place the proposal on the ballot directly.

Protest organizers from By Any Means Necessary (BAMN) promised to take the issue to the state Supreme Court next week. "We'll be asking to set aside the Court of Appeals decision," said George Washington, an attorney for the group.

But the ultimate decision will rest with organized workers and oppressed communities that join the high school students to say they won't go back. □

# TWU president to New Yorkers: 'Our fight is their fight'

*The following remarks were given by Roger Toussaint, President, Transport Workers Union Local 100, a little after 3 a.m. Dec. 20 announcing the strike.*

With a \$1 billion surplus, a contract between the MTA and Transport Workers Union Local 100 should have been a no-brainer. Sadly that has not been the case.

Our contract expired midnight on Thursday. In an attempt to save mass transit and in deference to our riders, we postponed our deadline and attempted to continue talking to the MTA.

From the beginning, the MTA approached these negotiations in bad faith, demanding arbitration before even trying to resolve the contract. Hours before contract expiration, the MTA got rid of its one billion dollar surplus—a surplus which we believe continues to be understated by some one hundred million dollars.

The MTA knew that reducing health and pension standards at the authority would be unacceptable to our union. They

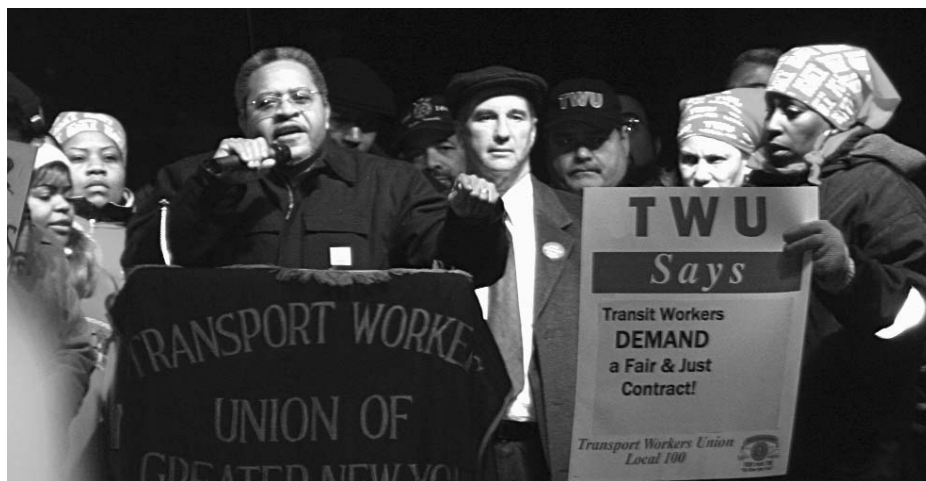
knew there was no good economic reason for their hard line on this issue—not with a billion dollar surplus. They went ahead anyway, supported by the Bloomberg administration which wants to overrun Municipal Labor Unions and all City workers with down-pressed wages and gutted health benefits and pension plans.

This has been combined with continued attempts by the MTA, joined by the Governor and the Mayor, to intimidate and threaten our members and their families.

This is a fight over whether hard work will be rewarded with a decent retirement—over the erosion or eventual elimination of health benefit coverage for working people. And it is a fight over dignity and respect on the job. A concept that is very alien to the MTA. Transit workers are tired of being under-appreciated and disrespected.

The Local 100 Executive Board has voted overwhelmingly to extend strike action to all MTA properties effective immediately.

All Local 100 representatives and shop



Roger Toussaint speaks at Dec. 15 rally.

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

stewards are directed to report to their assigned strike locations, picket lines or facility nearest you immediately.

To our riders, we ask for your understanding forbearance. We stood with you to keep token booths open, to keep conductors on the train and oppose fare hikes. We now ask that you stand with

us. We did not want a strike. Evidently the MTA, governor and the mayor did.

We call on all good will New Yorkers, the labor community, and all working people to recognize that our fight is their fight, and to rally in our support with solidarity activities and events. And to show the MTA that TWU does not stand alone. □

## Transit workers strike for dignity

*Continued from page 1*

in this city and far beyond.

### An unacceptable offer

The MTA executives caused this strike. They offered a take-it-or-leave-it two-tier contract. New workers would have to pay 1 percent of their wages toward health care; pension contributions would go from 2 percent to 6 percent, and retirement age would go from 55 to 62.

Regarding existing workers, the MTA demanded the right to move them around the system, close booths and eliminate conductors, endangering the safety of workers and straphangers. It has set higher levels of productivity to speed up operations and has handed down unprecedented disciplinary citations against the rank and file. The wage increase now being offered is far short of the rising cost of living.

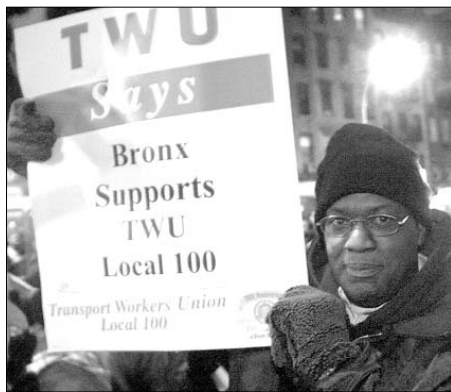
In a splendid show of solidarity, over 700 bus drivers who serve some 60,000 riders in Queens walked off their jobs 24 hours before the citywide strike. Employed by two private bus companies that were recently bought by the MTA, they have been without a contract for almost three years.

The Queens strike should have been a wakeup call to the MTA that the TWU meant business. The union knew the MTA had accumulated a surplus of over \$1 billion in this fiscal year.

The MTA gets revenue from sales taxes paid by the public, real estate transfer taxes, frequent increases in fares and bridge and tunnel tolls—another form of tax on the straphangers—and vast holdings of valuable real estate. It has accumulated billions of dollars in its treasury, much of which is hidden in financial manipulations. The union knew the MTA was cooking the books.

The majority of the privately appointed MTA board was handpicked by Governor Pataki and billionaire Mayor Bloomberg, the soul-mates of bankers and bondholders who receive huge profits from exorbitant interest rates on the MTA's huge debt. These parasites, along with well-heeled contractors, are the primary beneficiaries of the MTA budget.

On Dec. 15, the day the transit contract



WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

TWU members gear up for strike in front of Gov. Pataki's office Dec. 19.

expired, the MTA passed a \$9.3 billion budget for 2006 that included the \$1 billion surplus but offered nothing new to the 34,000 transit workers. The board passed it unanimously to avoid putting any of the surplus into the wage and benefit package. Peter Kalikow, MTA chairperson, had ignored the TWU's request to postpone budget talks until after a new contract was signed.

The TWU could have gone on strike that night, when the contract expired. But 7 million bus and subway riders could have been stranded. The union postponed the citywide shutdown, and New Yorkers grew to appreciate its sensitivity to their difficulties.

### Threats and insults

Governor Pataki arrogantly threatened the union: "I have three simple words. 'Don't do it.'" He praised the MTA for its hardball stance.

Billionaire Bloomberg chimed in with bullying threats of his own and issued an executive order declaring a state of emergency. He filed a lawsuit calling for fines against Local 100 of \$1 million a day, plus an additional \$25,000 against each rank-and-file member, to be doubled each day of the strike. In response to this insolence, TWU President Toussaint tore up the order to the thunderous cheers of thousands of rallying workers.

MTA chairperson Kalikow didn't show up at the negotiations until the eleventh hour on the last day before the strike deadline, when he issued a statement that an impasse had been reached.

All the big shots were threatening the union that the Taylor Law would be used. This law imposes jail time on union leaders and fines the workers two days' pay for each day of the strike. The fines the mayor wants to impose would be on top of this!

The repressive, anti-union Taylor Law needs to be challenged. It is unconstitutional and illegal. It bars public sector unions in New York State from exercising their right to free speech, free assembly and the right of due process.

Now that the city is shut down and the picket lines are in place, the struggle will quickly move to the courts, where high-priced state and city lawyers will file reams of papers for injunctive relief and lawsuits charging "contempt" of the Taylor Law. This is not the transit union's turf, but it has able lawyers who will challenge the anti-union repressive arguments. The judges involved will hear the arguments, but there will be other issues on their minds as they hand out the penalties.

The silent cash registers in the shopping malls, the paralysis surrounding Wall Street and big business, who can't ring up those billions if workers can't get to work on time or can't get there at all—this will pervade their thoughts. A fragile U.S. economy could be impacted. The judges, sensitive to the broader interests of the ruling class, may be wise enough to pressure the MTA executives to get the strike settled and go deeper into their pockets to get the TWU back to the table.

The class lines between the labor movement and the Wall Street exploiters are being sharply drawn. The New York Central Labor Council, representing over 1 million members, has joined the fray. And this crisis goes far beyond New York. The issues are health care, pensions, safety on the job and a decent standard of living affecting millions, organized and unorganized. Most important is the fight to end two-tier contracts. TWU Local 100 is holding the line.

### Standing up for future workers

The union wants the young and newly hired workers to get the same benefits as the current employees. This is a principle of the labor movement that has been lost in recent decades under an assault by the

bosses. They have followed a deliberate tactic of dividing workers and weakening their unions, setting the young and unorganized against the organized sector.

The TWU is demanding the \$1 billion surplus be used to include the needs of the "unborn"—workers not yet hired. Otherwise, the MTA hands it over to the rich, the greedy and corrupt.

The right-to-strike issue goes far beyond the borders of New York state. It is an inviolable right, a powerful weapon necessary to win a measure of justice for the labor movement. The strike weapon forces the rich and powerful to recognize that workers have power. A strike teaches the workers to measure their strength in a collective struggle and tests the weaknesses of the employers.

A strike raises the potential for class-wide solidarity, while recognizing the struggle against racism and the right of the nationally oppressed to self-determination. Workers and the oppressed nationalities will be able to separate friend from foe. A strike makes it clear that class collaboration only serves the interests of the bosses, the government and the laws used against unions. Labor needs to build an independent movement free from the machinations of capitalist political parties.

The workers' sacrifices and heroic acts of defiance bring forth leaders who can rise to the needs of the strike. A strike is a school of class warfare and elevates the economic struggle to a political level. Strikes are contagious, they spread. Shutting down New York City, the financial sector, the heartbeat of monopoly capitalism, will resonate nationally and internationally.

For the 34,000 multinational transit workers, men and women, and their leaders, the decision to strike was an awesome responsibility. They knew that to shut down the city during the height of holiday shopping would bring forth the wrath of state repression.

A one-day walkout by other city unions in sympathy with the transit workers, whose issues affect all city unions and their members, might bring the MTA and the servants of Wall Street to their senses. □

# Only one thing is clear

# Medicare drug plan locks

# in high prices

By Deirdre Griswold

An incredibly complex Medicare drug plan is due to go into effect on Jan. 1. More than 60 percent of seniors polled say they can't make head or tail of it. Only 20 percent say they'll enroll by the first of the year, despite the high-volume scare campaign by the government and the insurance companies warning that they will pay a penalty for enrolling later. "I have a Ph.D., and it's too complicated for me," says William Beard, 73, a retired chemist in Wichita, Kan.

And no wonder there is confusion. The plan contains few specifics about what it will cost the consumer. Those "details" can only be ascertained by investigating the many different private plans that may be available in your area—and may not.

In fact, if this can be called a government benefit plan, the benefit is not going to seniors and disabled people covered under Medicare. The legislation setting it up—the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003—was crafted by the drug companies and their flacks in Congress. It ensures that the benefits go to them: the owners of the pharmaceuticals, already the most profitable sector of the capitalist economy, with sales in the hundreds of billions of dollars each year. Also on the gravy train, of course, are the insurance companies that will be selling coverage to Medicare recipients under this plan.

These super-rich corporations have contributed millions to the political campaigns of key congressional leaders, as well as the president. Now, in their view, it's payback time.

The amount people in the U.S. spend on prescription drugs has been rising at a steep rate for years—especially since the pharmaceuticals got the laws changed to enable them to advertise their pills on television. By 2000, the drug companies had increased their spending on promotion to \$15.7 billion a year. In 2001, the pharmaceuticals took in \$132 billion in sales—20 percent more than a year earlier. About 20 drugs accounted for half the increase—reflecting the effectiveness of advertising

to boost these companies' revenues. In this period, the rate at which drug prices increased tripled the rate of inflation.

By 2002, the average senior on Medicare spent \$860 a year out-of-pocket for prescription drugs, according to the Congressional Budget Office—more than what they spent on physician care, vision services and medical supplies combined.

But the drug companies wanted even more.

## Losing business to Canada

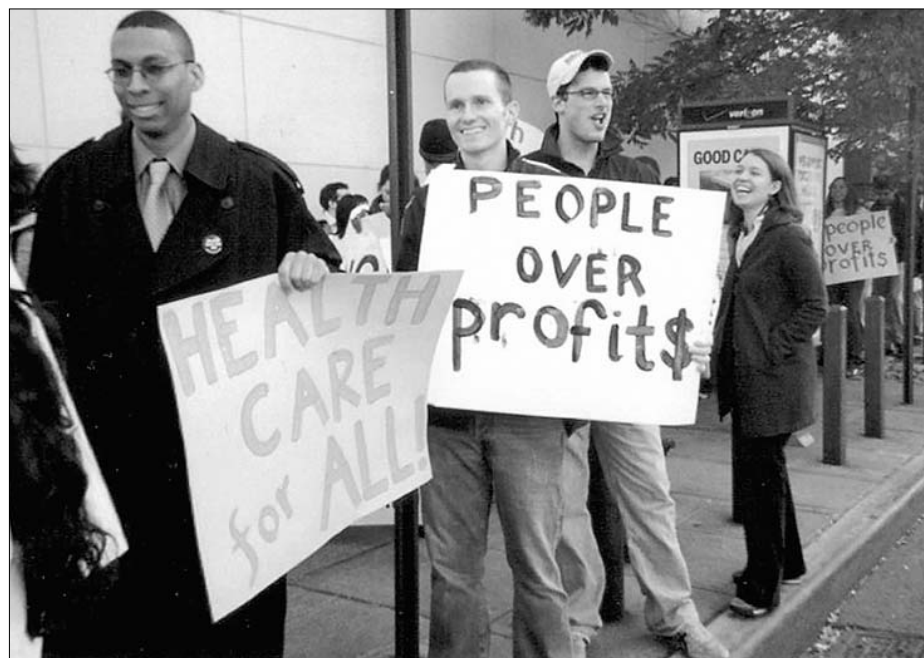
As the prices of drugs soared and demand increased, more and more people began looking elsewhere for their medicines. The same companies that sell prescription drugs in the U.S. also sell them in other countries around the world, including Canada. The U.S. is the only industrialized country with no regulations limiting drug prices, so the same pills are much more expensive here. As a result, by the summer of 2004, at least 1 million people living in the U.S. were filling their prescriptions in neighboring Canada, at a considerable saving.

Even though Washington was threatening to make it illegal, and even though the U.S. drug companies were threatening to cut off their Canadian distributors, senior groups started chartering buses to go buy their medicines in Canada. Even with the cost of the trip factored in, it was still considerably cheaper.

Soon cities, towns and even states were trying to make arrangements for their residents to buy cheaper medicines from Canada.

The city of Springfield, Mass., for example, arranged for its 3,000 public employees to get cheaper drugs from Canada. "We can save anywhere from \$4 million to \$9 million on an annual basis if I get everybody enrolled and everybody goes to Canada," Springfield Mayor Michael Albano told Morley Safer of NBC-TV. ("60 Minutes," Aug. 22, 2004) The mayor said this would keep Springfield from having to lay off essential workers in a budget crunch.

But when the state of Vermont in the summer of 2004 tried to import prescrip-



WW PHOTO: ANNE PRUDEN

NYC march and rally for universal healthcare Nov. 12 illustrates growing crisis everywhere.

tion drugs for its residents, the Food and Drug Administration barred the way. The state announced it would go to court.

## Locking people into high-priced medicines

Now the drug plan part of the Medicare reform act is about to go into effect. It will lock seniors and the disabled into plans based on the extortionate prices charged here by the drug companies. And under this act, the federal government is specifically prohibited from negotiating with drug companies to lower their prices.

In November 2005, according to the Social Security Administration, the average monthly check for all types of beneficiaries—retirees, their survivors and the disabled—was \$879. Seniors covered by Medicare Part B would pay a \$78 premium, leaving them \$801, or about \$9,600 per year.

If they choose a Medicare drug plan, they will pay an additional \$35 a month premium—reducing their Social Security check to \$766, or \$9,192 a year. There is a deductible of \$250 before the plan kicks in. After that, they pay 25 percent of all covered drug expenses up to \$2,250.

But what drugs are covered? It all depends on each individual private plan in each area. So does the price of the drugs. That's why it's so hard to know what all this will really cost each person out-of-pocket.

Let's assume that someone receiving the average yearly Social Security payout—\$9,192—is lucky enough to get a drug plan that covers the medicines they need, and that the total cost for the year comes to \$2,250. They pay \$250 for the deductible plus \$500 (25 percent of the next \$2,000), leaving them with a yearly income of \$8,442.

But what if their drugs cost more than that? It's not uncommon for someone with a heart condition or some other chronic ailment to spend \$300 a month on drugs these days.

Here's where the infamous "donut hole" comes in. With the next \$1,350 worth of medicines required, the Medicare drug plan covers—nothing! Zip.

The plan is supposed to provide assistance for very low-income people. But they can't have more than a few thousand dollars in assets. By the end of November, only one in nine of the 5.7 million low-income seniors not covered by Medicaid had been approved for assistance.

So it's obvious that the average person on Social Security who requires a signifi-

cant amount of medications will not be able to survive on this drug plan, unless they have substantial other income.

It will do nothing to lift anyone out of poverty—it may even help put them there.

The lawmakers from both big capitalist parties voted this act into existence under the pressure of the pharmaceuticals. Even the organization that supposedly lobbies in the interests of the elderly—the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)—capitulated to the pressure and endorsed it. It is now in the business of selling drug coverage to its members—the AARP MedicareRX Plan.

## Paying more and dying quicker

People in the U.S. now pay way more for health care than in any other country in the world, but our health statistics are far down the list.

In its World Health Report for 2000, the World Health Organization ranked the U.S. health system 37th in the world—worse than those of much poorer, smaller countries like Malta, Cyprus, Dominica and Costa Rica. In life expectancy, the U.S. was 53rd out of 219 countries.

These are shocking figures for a country that has for years been on the cutting edge of technology. But they also reflect political priorities: the U.S. spends as much on its military as the rest of the world combined.

They also reflect the great inequality in this country, where tens of millions of people are subject to racial and national oppression and discrimination that degrades their health in a thousand different ways.

The problem is not general underdevelopment. It is not a lack of resources. It is capitalism taken to its extremes, driven in every area of life by nothing but the profit motive and with few restraints coming from a government that has been thoroughly housebroken by the big moneyed interests.

Interns, medical students and other health care workers recently demonstrated in New York for a national health care system, free and available to all. This is a sea change for these professionals. Every progressive and working class organization must put the demand for socialized medicine on its agenda.

Health care is a right, not a privilege. It must be totally restructured to remove the profit motive from every level of health care while making quality preventive as well as curative medicine available to everyone. □

## New Orleans medical clinic

*Continued from page 3*

tions without proper protective gear.

Long-range health concerns for all residents include the as-yet-unknown effects of exposure to molds and multiple toxins in the floodwaters, and the psychological effects of trauma and displacement.

Anecdotes heard while working in New Orleans painted a vivid picture of the situation there today.

A patient described going through much paperwork to apply for a FEMA trailer since her home was uninhabitable. After many delays her application was finally approved. But when she asked to have the trailer placed on property owned by a family member in Algiers (which had escaped flooding) she was told that trailers could only be put in the area where the person had previously lived.

Her old neighborhood was without electricity, water or any other services, but that was the only place FEMA would put the trailer. This seemingly irrational

policy does have a purpose: it prevents families displaced from the poorer, largely African American neighborhoods from relocating to the wealthier, mostly white neighborhoods.

A well-to-do white man told how he rode out the storm in the second story of his house when the first floor flooded. Afterward he went out in his boat and rescued many elderly people trapped by the water. After waiting in vain for the helicopters to take the people to shelter, he brought them to his home. Having seen the utter failure of the government and relief organizations to provide for peoples' basic needs has turned him from a supporter of George W. Bush to one who hates everything the president stands for.

A doctor described the staffing situation at a local hospital, which has partly reopened. Most of the physicians have returned. He said. But there are too few nurses and a desperate shortage of nursing attendants, housekeeping and dietary workers. □

WORKERS WORLD STATEMENT

# UFPJ leadership divides the anti-war movement

It was with deep concern that we read a recent communication from United for Peace and Justice, sent out on Dec. 12 by its national coordinator, Leslie Cagan. It stated that the coalition had voted by a two-thirds majority to no longer collaborate with the ANSWER coalition in the anti-war movement.

We salute the one third of the member groups who put the need for principled unity of the anti-war movement first. They had the courage to stand up and resist the pressure to support what is a totally unprincipled measure, which can severely injure the unity of the movement at a critical time when there are new openings to escalate the anti-war struggle.

The UFPJ document is filled with organizational complaints about ANSWER. We believe that these organizational complaints are merely a cover behind which the UFPJ leadership is readying an open shift to the right, orienting to the so-called “anti-war” elements in the capitalist establishment and preparing to use the anti-war movement as a platform for promoting the Democratic Party in the 2006 elections. We think that beyond being an attack on ANSWER, this document was a reflection of the aversion of the UFPJ leadership to anti-imperialist politics of international solidarity and to the orientation that rejects support for the Democratic Party.

But some things must be reviewed for the record. In the preamble to UFPJ’s declaration it referred to how they originally “did not believe it would be productive to make coordination with ANSWER a centerpiece of our September 24 efforts” and then went on to make a convoluted explanation of why they had changed their minds.

## The truth about UFPJ and Sept. 24

This is completely disingenuous. The facts are that UFPJ, after having called for a demonstration in New York City on Sept. 10, 2005, switched it to Sept. 24 in Washington, D.C.—the same day and the same city where ANSWER had already called for a demonstration. This precipitated a crisis of disunity and confusion in the movement.

It had the effect of forcing people to choose between going to a demonstration organized by anti-imperialist forces, who defended the Palestinian and Arab cause, or going to one called by the more moderate anti-war forces. This, in spite of the fact that there was a strong political basis among the rank-and-file, new and old, for unity around the question of bringing the troops home now, ending occupations, and using money for human needs, not war.

Fortunately, the progressive activists in the movement prevailed and forced UFPJ to retract its plans for a separate demonstration.

This hard-fought unity resulted in a major revival of the anti-war movement in which 300,000 people came out and marched together. There were, of course, many shortcomings of the demonstration, including the fact that it was predominantly white and that the working class was not a strong force in the demonstration. But those

are major historical problems that the movement must fight to overcome. These are matters outside the framework of this dispute and do not diminish the success of Sept. 24, such as it was.

The UFPJ communication ostensibly based its decision on three grounds, arising from the Sept. 24 demonstration: that ANSWER went beyond its agreed-upon time slot and thereby got more coverage on C-SPAN, putting forth a political message that was skewed; that ANSWER began the march an hour later than agreed upon; and that ANSWER did not turn out enough volunteers, thereby putting an added burden on UFPJ.

ANSWER has given a detailed refutation of these charges. But whether some or none of them are true is beside the point. Whatever difficulties were experienced by UFPJ, actual or perceived, they pale in comparison to the need to unite the broadest possible forces who are devoted to the immediate, unconditional and complete withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Iraq.

All organizations in the anti-war struggle owe it to the Iraqi people, the people of the Middle East, and the workers and oppressed people right here at home to subordinate their own particular organizational interests to maximizing mass mobilization, so long as it is on a principled basis.

The Iraqi people are suffering death and destruction every day from the onslaught of the U.S. military machine. According to Johns Hopkins University, the Iraqi death toll now stands at upwards of 119,000. Tens of thousands are in jails. Families are separated. Cities and towns are in ruins from repeated U.S. military raids and air bombardments. The Iraqi resistance fighters are giving their lives daily to expel the colonial occupiers.

The suffering and sacrifice of the Iraqi people in the daily struggle are of such monumental magnitude in human terms that the UFPJ leaders should be ashamed to even bring up their relatively minuscule organizational complaints as a reason for breaking the unity of the struggle against the war.

But UFPJ’s motivation is not organizational. It is political. The leadership of UFPJ has always been against the left and has always oriented towards the Democratic Party. Those who constitute the leadership today were in organizations that tried to isolate and undermine the anti-imperialist forces and all militancy going back to the Vietnam-War era. These leaders were in favor of “sanctions, not war” during the Gulf War of 1991.

UFPJ was actually created in reaction to and in opposition to ANSWER after Sept. 11, 2001, when ANSWER became the central force resisting the Bush campaign of “permanent war.” From the moment UFPJ was created, its leadership resisted any united front and had to be dragged by the movement, including its own member organizations, into united activity. This happened on April 20, 2002; Oct. 25, 2003; March 20, 2004; and this past Sept. 24.

## UFPJ and the Democrats

Up until now, however, the UFPJ leaders have handled their splitting activities one demonstration at a time, without openly elevating their opposition to ANSWER and, in reality, the whole anti-imperialist left, to the level of firm policy. What has changed? It’s the combination of the beginning of a split in the ruling class and the approach of the 2006 elections.

John Murtha, the militarist Democratic Party Congress member from Pennsylvania who is close to the Pentagon, declared that “It is time to bring the troops home”—when “practical,” hopefully in six months. He is for leaving a strike force “over the horizon.” Murtha’s position reveals a growing split among the generals and in the ruling class over the war.

Murtha, Nancy Pelosi and other Democratic Party leaders did not shed one tear for the Iraqi people. On the contrary, they represent the forces that want to find a way to salvage the interests of U.S. imperialism, which has sunk into a quagmire with the colonial adventure in Iraq. At the same time, they want to utilize the growing anti-war sentiment, not to get the U.S. out of Iraq, but to get themselves into office, where they will pursue a “multilateral” approach to securing the interests of Washington, Wall Street and the Pentagon in Iraq and everywhere.

Leslie Cagan and the social democratic leaders of UFPJ took this as their cue to put up a firewall between themselves and the anti-imperialist left and stretch out their arms to what they hope will be a bourgeois opposition. At the same time, they see Bush’s poll numbers dropping, the Republicans beset by corruption scandals, and the Democratic Party salivating in expectation of taking back the Congress in 2006.

Up until now, the UFPJ leadership had been forced to unite with the anti-imperialist forces because the capitalist politicians were nowhere to be found in the fight against Bush to stop the war. Their criticisms were restricted to what happened before the war—the lies about WMDs, about Iraqi links to al-Qaeda,

etc.—and how badly the war was going. John Kerry was still calling for more troops until only recently. Hillary Clinton was also a hawk. But now that the odor of a bourgeois opposition has arisen from the halls of Congress, the UFPJ leadership is anticipating new alliances to the right.

This is not only a matter of speculation. Communications from U.S. Labor Against the War (USLAW) reveal that before the UFPJ leadership issued its attack on ANSWER, it was already in discussions about an April action with the moderate and bourgeois forces, including USLAW, Win Without War, NOW, PUSH and other moderate, social-patriotic forces, all of whom are oriented to the Democratic Party.

## Democrats: a war party

The Democratic Party leadership is firmly under the control of the imperialist establishment. The Democratic Party, on the whole, is a war party. Virtually every Democratic president in the last hundred years has carried out imperialist wars and interventions. Just in the last half century, John F. Kennedy invaded Cuba and began the Vietnam War, which Lyndon Johnson continued; Carter tried to invade Iran and started a clandestine war against what was then a progressive government in Afghanistan; Clinton carried out air wars against Yugoslavia and Iraq and imposed genocidal sanctions on Iraq. The Republicans, of course, were part of all this.

The social democratic, liberal and pacifist forces that the UFPJ leadership is looking to form a bloc with, as opposed to anti-imperialist forces, see the ascendancy of the Democrats as the solution to the Bush reaction. But the only real way to push back the reactionary forces of capitalism so as to end the war and benefit the workers and the oppressed at home is to build an independent, militant movement on the ground that is willing to fight.

Winning Congress for the Democrats won’t end the war. Congress is a talk shop. If it were more than that, at any given moment it could use any one of a hundred reasons to impeach Bush, to cut off funds for the war and occupation, to bring up Cheney on charges of being the “torture vice president,” and many other things.

Getting the Democrats in the White House, where they will be administering the aggressive, repressive capitalist state against the people at home and abroad, is no answer either.

The pages of this newspaper have advocated and encouraged anti-war unity with ANSWER and all other progressive and anti-imperialist forces, and will continue to do so where appropriate in the interests of the struggle. Organizational questions must be subordinated to the task of ending the occupation.

In that regard, we encourage the movement to call to task the leadership of UFPJ and force them to reverse this divisive policy. The solemn duty to get U.S. imperialism off the back of the Iraqi people, to bring the troops home, and to defeat U.S. schemes to impose an “Iraqization” of the occupation requires the strongest unity, independent of the parties of the war makers. □

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WW PHOTO: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD



# Still under occupation

## Iraqi election takes place

By John Catalinotto

Before discussing details about the Iraqi election, it's important to establish the most important facts: It was held during the military occupation of Iraq, with a curfew and limits on travel in place enforced by the U.S. and Iraqi puppet military. The most reactionary collaborationist forces controlled the election rules and counted the ballots, especially in the south and in the Kurdish regions of the northeast.

Most candidates, whether they meant it or not, promised that the election would be a step toward ending the occupation.

Apparently there was much greater vote participation throughout the central and northwestern parts of the country, where the resistance is strongest, than in the January "election" or the Oct. 15 referendum on the "constitution." While the U.S. government hailed this participation as a sign of a waning resistance, it is even more a sign that the best organized resistance forces consciously decided not to disrupt or threaten the election in what the imperialist media calls the "Sunni regions." There were relatively few attacks during the voting period.

Within days, resistance forces announced—and the media reported—a resumption of attacks, especially against U.S. troops, Iraqi puppet troops and police and

Iraqi collaborators.

Within those same days, Iraqis from the Sunni-based National Concord Front protested over election fraud. "We reject these results announced by the commission," Adnan Al Dulaimi, one of the leaders of the National Concord Front, told a news conference Dec. 20.

The reactionary and collaborationist Islamic Supreme Council (SCIRI) and the Dawa party—Shiite religious parties strongest in Iraq's South—and the two major pro-occupation Kurdish parties in the North, came out on top in the new assembly, judging by early voting results. Altogether there were 200 charges of irregularities made against the election.

In the referendum on the constitution held in October, it was obvious that voting at least in Kurdish areas was fraudulent, with alleged vote totals sometimes outstripping the eligible voters. Only by fixing the vote in one province, Nineveh, that was expected to vote by more than two-thirds "No" in the referendum, could the authorities get the constitution approved.

### Bush tries maneuver

The Bush administration did its best to give a positive spin to the election, scheduling a network television talk by George Bush and a speech in Baghdad by Dick Cheney on Dec. 18.

Bush admitted the reasons he gave for the war were false, but still tried to sell the project as worthwhile. It was the latest of a series of administration talks trying to win support for a "stay the course" policy in Iraq and to justify the original aggression, which had no legitimate excuse. From reactions to his talk, there were few signs he had convinced many people in the U.S. that somehow the U.S. situation in Iraq had improved.

Bush's speech had even less effect in Iraq. As one Westerner living in Baghdad put it, "I was going to listen to Bush's speech, but the electricity was out." If anything depicts the failure of the U.S. occupation, it is its inability to get the Iraqi economy moving and to provide basic services for even a solid minority of the Iraqi population.

Cheney's talk was even more of a disaster. His visit to Iraq was kept secret up to his arrival, and he spoke before hundreds of Marines, usually a sympathetic and disciplined audience. This time the rank-and-file Marines hit Cheney with tough questions about whether it was worthwhile staying in Iraq. When Cheney ended his speech with "these colors don't run," instead of getting cheers, he got no applause and one lone whistle.

Some analysts raised the possibility that among those participating in the election were civilian supporters of the resistance,

much as Sinn Fein was a civilian party reflecting the positions of the Irish Republican Army. Publicly, the Baathist, nationalist and pro-communist resistance groups said they opposed participation in the election—even though they didn't make armed attacks to disrupt it. These resistance forces distanced themselves from the National Concord Front and other civilian anti-occupation groups regarding the election.

The heavy turnout in the center of Iraq showed in itself that anti-occupation Iraqis voted in the election.

On Dec. 19, four days after the election, the U.S. occupiers freed from prison some 24 high Baathist officials—people guilty of no particular crime although some had been demonized by the U.S.'s war propaganda—after holding them for 30 months.

Among them were two women, Rihab Taha, a bioscientist, and Dr. Huda Salih Mahdi Ammash, a biotech researcher who was No. 39 on the U.S. list of the "most wanted fugitives" of the Hussein regime. Dr. Ammash is known to people in the anti-war movement worldwide for her work on the ravages of depleted uranium on the population of Iraq stemming from the 1991 U.S.-led bombardment and anti-tank actions.

The U.S. authorities gave no public reason for releasing these high-level Baathist figures at this particular time. □

# MARCH 18-19: Troops Out Now Coalition's call to action

**ON MARCH 18 & 19,  
the third anniversary of the war:**

- **World unity against the war—  
Bring all the troops home now!**
- **End all occupations**
- **Stop the war abroad  
and the war at home**
- **Justice for Katrina survivors**
- **Money for people's needs,  
not war**
- **Unite against racism, poverty  
and war!**

**In New York City—  
March from Harlem  
to Times Square!**

**Demonstrations in Boston,  
Detroit, Denver, Baltimore,  
Atlanta, Los Angeles, San Diego,  
Raleigh, N.C., Washington, D.C.,  
Buffalo, N.Y., and across the  
country!**

The Troops Out Now Coalition (TONC) joins the world movement against the war in calling for coordinated mass protests and resistance to the war and occupation of Iraq on the weekend of March 18 and 19, the third anniversary of the U.S. invasion. It must be clear that the people will not be fooled by partial withdrawal plans. We demand the withdrawal of all occupation troops now.

Let's stand together with our sisters and brothers across the world against all colonial occupations—from Iraq and Palestine, to Afghanistan and Haiti, to the Philippines, South Korea and Puerto Rico. Stop the threats to Iran and Venezuela. Hands Off Cuba. Together we demand no more new wars.



Bush's arrogant response to the demand to withdraw the troops from Iraq is a renewed vow to continue the criminal colonial occupation of Iraq and elsewhere until "victory." The leaders of the Democratic Party, for all their criticism of the way that the Bush regime has conducted the war, remain war supporters.

If we've learned anything over the past three years, it is that the only force that we can rely on to stop the war and occupation, bring the troops home and stop the plan for world empire by military force is the people mobilized into a mass, militant movement that makes itself felt in the streets.

In the U.S., TONC urges all anti-war coalitions and organizations, at the national and local level, to work together on the mobilizations in March, for this is the best way to ensure that the popular opposition to the war be turned into mass opposition in the streets. It is not necessary that all coalitions have identical views, BUT it is necessary that we not allow differences to be an obstacle to unity.

With the level of opposition to the war stronger than ever, we could bring the entire country to a halt on March 18 and 19. We, as a movement, can do that only if we commit to forging unity.

TONC will be organizing for March 18 and 19 in every city large and small—from Boston to Los Angeles, from Atlanta to Detroit. In New York City, TONC invites everyone to join us in a mass march from Harlem to Times Square for a rally on Saturday, March 18. By marching from the capital of the African-American community in the U.S. to the center of the city, we hope to underscore the reality that we are fighting to stop two wars—the war abroad and the war at home against racism and poverty.

Among the many challenges that we face as anti-war activists and organizers, nothing is more important than linking the concrete struggles of poor and working people, especially people of color in this country, to the anti-war struggle. Calif. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's denial of clemency to death row inmate, Stanley Tookie Williams, is only the latest example of the systemic racism that oppresses, tortures and kills people in many different ways.

Our unity is strengthened by supporting full rights for immigrant workers here in the U.S.—not sweeps, arrests, deportation and fear. And our unity is strengthened by standing with people struggling for the right to return to their

homes—this includes tens of thousands of people in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast kept from their homes by the criminal neglect and racism of FEMA, and the struggle of the Palestinian people for the right to return to their historic homeland.

The racism and lethal hostility of the government towards poor and working people, exposed by the response to Hurricane Katrina, has made the strengthening of links all the more urgent. TONC proposes that all anti-war and progressive forces demonstrate solidarity with the struggle of Katrina survivors by making the demand for justice for Katrina survivors central to the March protests by engaging communities of color; making the protests relevant to these communities; coordinating with the survivors of Katrina and the activists involved in the Katrina struggle.

Let's keep the movement where it needs to be—in the streets—and let's work together like never before.

**TROOPS OUT NOW COALITION**  
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New York, N.Y. 10011  
(212) 633-6646  
info@troopsoutnow.org  
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WW PHOTO:  
MONICA  
MOOREHEAD

By Mumia Abu-Jamal from death row

## ‘All the news....?’

Following are excerpts from a Dec. 1 commentary.

In the wake of this wretched war, we have more than enough reason to look, with jaundiced eye, at the American major media.

The adjectives that have been used to describe their performance, in the face of fake ‘evidence’, scare tactics, and global state terrorism against the poor and the weak; and their abject servitude to the centers of political and economic power, have been terms like supine, servile, and genuflective.

The corporate media became an instrument through which the White House worked its way upon the public, threatening dissidents, locking up innocents, threatening other countries, all in pursuance of madness.

The media, afraid of alienating its audiences, and more importantly, of upsetting government officials, opened its pages, its airwaves, and its microphones, serving only as amplifiers for the State.

Few mainstream papers have the heft and influence of the New York Times, yet, even there, their star reporter became little more than a stenographer for the neocons at the highest levels of power. They served, not the interest of their readers, nor their children, but of power.

Remember the spectacle of a vampirish Vice President Dick Cheney, citing the “Times”, of all sources, in support of his claims of WMDs?

Now, trapped by the very real threat of civil war, U.S. politicians find themselves pinned to the wall, like monarch butterflies, forced to support the unsupportable. Now, comes word of secret prisons, in the lands of the former Soviet Union, run by the CIA, where God knows what is being done to people, in the name of a nebulous ‘war on terror.’

Does anybody really believe that American forces aren’t engaged in torture? The new U.S. appointed regime in Iraq has learned well the lessons of its American paymasters. In the shadow of Abu Ghraib, dozens of Sunnis are tortured, and caged in secret prisons!

What, pray tell, are the Americans to say? “Don’t do as we do”?

We’ve virtually forgotten the case of the Chinese-American Muslim chaplain, James Yee. New Jersey-born, a West Point graduate, it was during his tour in Saudi Arabia that he learned about Islam, where he was intrigued by the cultural diversity.

For complaining about the treatment that he saw and heard at the Guantanamo Bay naval station {prison camp—WW}, he found himself labeled, and soon treated, as an “enemy combatant,” charged with espionage, and called a “known terrorist sympathizer.” He was put in the ‘three-piece suit’: shackled hands, feet, and belly. He was thrown into solitary confinement (See his book: “For God and Country: Faith and Patriotism Under Fire”, by James Yee (with Aimee Molloy) (publ., Political Affairs).

He was in solitary for 76 days, before charges were dropped.

All of this comes back to the role of the press. It either serves the interests of freedom, or it serves the interests of Empire. It can’t serve both.

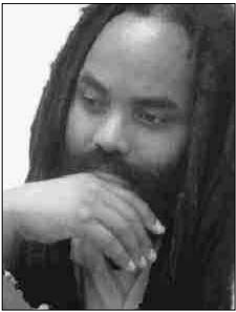
It is doing the reporting now that should’ve been done before the outbreak of war.

Most reporters knew that there was absolutely no link between 9/11 and Iraq. Most reporters knew, if they’d done their research, that there was absolutely no connection between Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden. Yet, through fear or the ingrained instinct to serve power, they allowed the Bush Regime to “let slip the dogs of war.”

Unless I miss my guess, it will be plenty of years before we really see the end of this adventure. That’s because it will be many years before things will even begin to quiet down in Iraq.

Perhaps 100,000 Iraqis have been killed, many by the U.S. Army and Air Forces. Over 2,000 Americans have died. Billions of dollars have been wasted, or ripped off by corrupt Iraqi politicians or American corporations. And Americans have done little more than stoke the fires of anti-American hatred throughout the region. Recently, the Muslim Brotherhood, a staunch opponent of the Mubarak Regime in Egypt, won more than five times its previous seats in Parliament. Islamicist parties are stronger than ever in the Muslim world, largely as a direct reaction to the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

The media could’ve prevented much of this, if it only had done its job. □



# Bush spy scandal causes ruling-class rift

By Fred Goldstein

As each day goes by, revelations emerge demonstrating the relentless campaign by the Bush administration to undermine civil liberties, promote the extra-legal powers of spy agencies, use secret prisons, torture and military courts, and expand the repressive authority of the presidency by going beyond conventional bourgeois legality. These revelations are finally coming out because important sections of the ruling class are becoming alarmed at this development.

The latest uproar concerns the authority that President George W. Bush has granted to the National Security Agency (NSA) to carry out surveillance, including wiretapping, monitoring cell phones and reading e-mail of individuals in the U.S. whom the NSA declares to be “terror suspects” without the government first obtaining a warrant from the special secret courts that have been set up to oversee such spying.

The NSA, which operates under the authority of the president, is the most powerful spy agency in the government. It is charged with spying on everything from foreign governments to diplomats to resistance movements to trade negotiations. It has the most technologically advanced spying equipment in the world and is so secretive that the letters NSA are often referred to cynically as No Such Agency.

Under the rules of U.S. imperialism, the NSA has complete legal license to spy abroad without requiring a warrant—no matter how much this damages the interests and violates the rights of oppressed peoples and working class movements. But it is required to get a warrant if it wants to spy on someone in the U.S., and then can only legally spy on them if they are in the process of carrying on international communications.

The restrictions are based on the 1978 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), passed in the wake of the Watergate affair when Richard Nixon used the CIA, the NSA and other agencies to spy on the anti-war movement. He also used them to go after his “enemies’ list,” which included rival factions in the ruling class and Democratic Party politicians, among others. The scandal caused Nixon to resign.

The statute set up a FISA court of 11 judges who meet secretly in the Justice Department to review requests by intelligence agencies for surveillance permission. If they approve, they grant a warrant allowing spying. Since the court was established, it has approved thousands and thousands of warrants and has denied only four.

Nevertheless, after Sept. 11, Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney, with the support of Attorney General John Ashcroft, decided to disregard the required FISA court-approval process of obtaining warrants. They established what they called the “special collections program.” The so-called legal authority for Bush to override the law was established by then-Assistant Attorney General John Yoo, a right-winger who wrote that after Sept. 11 Bush could use his powers as “commander in chief” to circumvent the FISA court.

John Yoo is author of the infamous

“torture memo” that declared Bush could give the authority to torture, deriving from his military powers as commander in chief. This memo, which created the political environment for torture at Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib and Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan, was later disavowed by the Bush administration.

This conspiracy was outed by the New York Times in a major article in its Dec. 17 edition. The Times had sat on the article for more than a year at the request of the government. Because it had Watergate-like implications, the publisher and the editor of the Times, Arthur Sulzberger and Bill Keller, respectively, were called to the Oval Office and pressured not to print it.

Bush at first tried to duck questions about it. Then he went on the offensive, defiantly taking responsibility for ordering the illegal searches. But he declared his determination to continue them, saying they were constitutional, denounced his critics and is calling for an investigation of the leak.

Bush, Cheney and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice have mounted a defense. Their line is that they had to move quickly in the post-Sept. 11 era to “save lives.” But the remarkable fact is that they continue to maintain this position, even though they have the authority under the law to move without the permission of the court, so long as they retroactively apply for the warrant within 72 hours.

At least two conclusions can be drawn from this. First, the spying that they are doing is so outrageously unrelated to anything but bringing terror and intimidation with wild fishing expeditions that they might run into FISA court opposition. Second, the Bush-Cheney group, feeling all-powerful in the wake of Sept. 11, thought they were in a position to defy bourgeois legality and give Bush authoritarian powers.

In fact, during a recent flight on his way back from Pakistan, Cheney gave an interview to the New York Times, published on Dec. 21, in which he openly discussed his role in trying to reshape the presidency and reverse the post-Watergate reforms. He said that the War Powers Resolution, which requires the president to go to Congress

for approval within 90 days after sending U.S. forces abroad, was “an infringement on the authority of the presidency” and suggested it could be unconstitutional. The FISA statute was one of those reforms.

Meanwhile, the Democrats and moderate Republicans like Arlen Specter and Chuck Hagel are calling for investigations. Watergate figure John Dean stated that Bush is the first president to openly admit to an impeachable offense. Back-room talk of impeachment is surfacing and Specter has promised hearings in January.

The whistle was blown by “nearly a dozen current and former officials” of the NSA, according to the Times. Countless legal experts from the civilian and military establishment have expressed dismay at what Bush did. If the reactionary officials, whose job it is to monitor and help disrupt governments, liberation movements, trade negotiations and anything that might harm U.S. imperialism, are breaking ranks with Bush over the “special collections program,” then the masses of people should know that there is much more beneath the surface than is being admitted during this dispute.

The ruling class generally adheres to imperialist democracy, not because it is concerned with the rights of the workers and oppressed or for the protection of progressive forces. Its concerns that any one reactionary grouping might seize control are on various grounds: an out-of-control group ruining the position of U.S. imperialism in the world, as the Bush administration has gone a long way toward doing; a narrow grouping giving the lion’s share of the spoils from a \$2 trillion state budget to its friends and shutting out its rivals; the establishing of processes, like many provisions in the Patriot Act, that can interfere with business operations and enable spying on corporations.

These are all ruling-class motives that can ignite a struggle against a narrow, power-hungry grouping that tries to monopolize the capitalist state. But the workers and oppressed have an independent interest in defending basic constitutional legality: to defend their own rights against the bosses and their government. This they have to do through their own independent struggle. □



## WE WON'T GO! The Truth on Military Recruiters and the Draft A Guide to Resistance

From the Introduction: “Army recruiting is in a death spiral,” says retired Army Lt. Col. Charles Krohn, a lifelong Republican and former Pentagon public affairs official.

As the bloody colonial occupation of Iraq drags on into its third year, the Army continues to miss its recruiting quotas—falling short by a staggering 42% in April of 2005.

Maj. Gen. Michael D. Rochelle, commander of Army recruiting, predicted that 2006 could be the toughest recruiting year since the draft was ended in 1973.

This book is aimed at increasing recruiting problems by helping young people and their parents counter the lies of the recruiters.

In this book, you will find practical tools for challenging recruiters, exposing their falsehoods, and getting them out of our schools.

Publisher: International Action Center, 90 pages, index. \$14.95, ISBN 0974752118  
www.IACenter.org Available at **Leftbooks.com** for \$12



**BOLIVIA**

# Morales wins big, vows change

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

The indigenous peoples of Bolivia, dispossessed and poor, proudly attained the nation’s presidency for the first time ever on Dec. 18. After more than a century of their social and economic exclusion by U.S. transnational corporations, in cahoots with the country’s oligarchy, Evo Morales of the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) was elected president. Morales, from the Aymara indigenous nation, won with more than 50 percent of the vote, avoiding a runoff election. The final count is not in as of this writing, but with more than 85 percent of the votes counted, the MAS victory was certain.

Morales’s triumph was jubilantly celebrated by the combative Bolivian masses—from his home city of Cochabamba to El Alto, a famous bastion of resistance to neoliberalism. The latter was proclaimed capital of the Bolivian Revolution of the 21st century during strikes last June that deposed former president Carlos Mesa.

In Cochabamba, residents warned current Parliament officials that they wanted Morales to govern and would not let them steal the MAS victory. They shouted, “Evo valiente, ya eres presidente.” (Brave Evo, now you are president.)

Morales responded to the people: “Thank you. We broke the record. No party had ever won before with more than 51 percent of the votes. Now what is left is to struggle for the unification of Latin America.”

This victory happened despite the removal of almost a million voters, mostly supporters of MAS, from the electoral listing. The National Electoral Court had ruled that people who did not vote in the 2004 regional elections were to be taken off the list. This prompted demonstrations and denunciations by thousands of people, who complained that even though they had voted, they were now being eliminated.

Morales also objected, saying, “Instead of the Electoral Court purging the Bolivian people, the Bolivian people should purge

the members of the National Electoral Court.”

This conclusive victory and high voter turnout represents the determination of the indigenous, who make up 62 percent of the population, as well as the rest of the poor masses and even a sector of the middle class who want a different path for Bolivia and would like to see a sovereign nation free from foreign domination.

Bolivian writer Alex Contreras Baspineiro spoke with Workers World after the elections. “For us,” he said, “the biggest surprise of these elections was that the MAS won more than 30 percent support in the region of Santa Cruz, where a campaign of fear, blackmail and dirty war has been waged.”

Santa Cruz, in the eastern lowlands, is home to the racist, white oligarchy allied to the U.S. It is in a region rich in natural gas. In recent years, a secessionist movement demanding autonomy has been supported by the U.S. Embassy and the transnational oil companies.

The voters dealt imperialism a slap in the face by supporting Morales over pro-U.S. candidates.

## Washington’s favorites decimated

Morales, with no college degree, has been a representative to the National Parliament and organizer of Bolivian coca farmers. Washington’s favorite was Jorge Quiroga from the party Podemos, who was Bolivia’s president in 2001-02. A Texas A&M University graduate and former IBM executive, Quiroga finished a distant second with around 30 percent of the vote. His political platform was based on “free trade” as a way to supposedly eradicate poverty. He supports the U.S. coca-eradication program that has left farmers destitute.

Cement magnate Samuel Doria Medina, a candidate from the party National Unity and also the owner of Burger King restaurants in Bolivia, came in a distant third.

Morales campaigned on three main points. The first was nationalization of

Bolivia’s natural gas reserves — the largest in South America, after Venezuela.

Second is the convening of a Constitutional Assembly to lay the basis for a new Bolivia.

Third, Morales opposed neoliberal policies, including the U.S. program to eradicate coca in Bolivia. The coca leaf has long been used by Latin America’s indigenous population as a traditional medicine and is not addictive. It is also sold for use in the formulation of other medicines. Only after the coca leaf is chemically processed to make cocaine does it become dangerous.

Morales’s running mate, Alvaro Garcia Linera, has publicly explained the MAS position: raising the penalties for drug trafficking and involving the coca growers themselves in combating it, while ending the toxic chemical spraying of their fields.

Morales is opposed to the U.S.-sponsored Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), which he calls “an agreement to legalize the colonization of the Americas.” This has not been received well by Washington.

In the Dec. 15-21 issue of Progreso Weekly, Saul Landau writes: “The prospect of socialist peasant leader Evo Morales as Bolivia’s next president disturbed Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Charles Shapiro. ‘It would not be welcome news in Washington to see the increasingly belligerent Cuban-Venezuelan combo become a trio,’ he e-mailed on Oct. 21, 2005, to the Miami Herald’s Andres Oppenheimer.”

Several statements from U.S. officials, including Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, already show their hostility toward the elected Bolivian president. In an interview with CNN in Spanish, Rice arrogantly asked, “Will the new Bolivian government have a democratic behavior? Will it be ready to have good relations and maintain the economic aid it receives?”

Morales has already received death threats and is increasingly being demonized in the capitalist media. The Dec. 20 issue of the Washington Post quotes Ber-



Evo Morales, left, is congratulated by a leader of mine workers, Walter Villarroel

nard Aronson, an international consultant in Washington and a former State Department official, as saying: “The old threat in Latin America was that of military coups. The new threat is that of authoritarian democracies—leaders who get elected and then use the state to repress opponents, push through social change and stay in power. That is what Chávez is doing, and what Lula is not doing. The big question is, which way will Evo Morales go?”

Imperialist danger roams throughout Latin America, trying to turn back the revolutionary tide spreading in the region. But as history has proven, the powerful people’s struggle for justice against hunger, misery and capitalist exploitation is often underestimated by the imperialists, as shown with the courageous insurgency in Iraq.

Baspineiro concludes, “We know that the challenge is huge. In Bolivia we are going through a difficult conjuncture, but we are hopeful, strengthened and motivated to write this new page in the history of our country. We know it will be a very difficult page, but we are convinced that if we do not make profound structural changes in the next few months, Bolivia will be at the edge of a cliff.

“And we, together with the overwhelming majority that voted for us, are convinced that from the first day of our government, we will try to put into practice the program that we have presented to the country, of which I would like to highlight the nationalization of the hydrocarbons [natural gas], the Constitutional Assembly and the overturn of the 21060 decree, which is the basis of the neoliberal model.

“We Bolivians have endorsed change and the rebuilding of Bolivia, and we cannot betray the hope that is not only national, but continental, for the construction of [Bolívar’s] big homeland, which is also a worldwide hope.” □

# NYU bans Coca-Cola products

By LeiLani Dowell  
New York

New York University announced on Dec. 12 that it has banned all Coca-Cola products. The ban is the outcome of a two-year struggle by activists at NYU, the Campaign to Stop Killer Coke (CSKC) and New York City Council Member Hiram Monserrate.

Their drive was based on the refusal of Coke to agree to an independent third-party investigation of alleged labor violations at its Colombian plants.

At least eight murders of workers in Colombia’s Coca-Cola plants have occurred since 1989 — seven union officials and one plant manager — and daily union members at these plants face harassment, kidnapping, firings, and threats against their lives and the lives of their families. However, Coca-Cola’s crimes are not limited to Colombia — it faces allegations of human rights violations in India, Turkey, Pakistan and Guatemala as well.

Coca-Cola refused to submit to the investigation because it did not want the findings of the probe to be admissible as

evidence in a related lawsuit currently being argued against the company’s affiliate in Miami. In addition, Coke would not agree with NYU on the level of security that should be provided to employees being interviewed in the process, according to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

The Dec. 12 ban at the largest private university in the United States is the eleventh ban of the product on campuses throughout the country, and at least the twentieth worldwide. According to a CSKC press release, students at over 70 colleges and universities in the U.S. have called for an investigation into Coke’s labor rights violations in Colombia.

The press conference was also attended by members of NYU’s Graduate Student Organizing Committee, who have been striking since Nov. 9 after the university refused to negotiate a second contract with the union. Speakers and signs linked the two struggles, saying “GSOC in — Coke out!”

Ray Rogers, director of CSKC, said, “This victory becomes even sweeter when one recognizes that Coca-Cola board member Barry Diller, chairman and chief

executive officer of InterActiveCorp, is on the Board of Trustees of New York University....Coke’s problems are only going to mushroom at colleges, universities and high schools, while support continues to grow among unions, human rights groups and others.”

In an e-mail announcing the victory at NYU, the Campaign to Stop Killer Coke quotes SINALTRAINAL Vice President Juan Carlos Galvis in Colombia: “If we lose the fight against Coca-Cola, we will first lose our union, next our jobs and then our lives.”

Coca-Cola products include Minute Maid fruit juices, Dasani water, Sprite, Fanta, Nestea, Odwalla and Powerade. For more information on the Campaign to Stop Killer Coke, visit [www.killercoke.org](http://www.killercoke.org).

The overwhelming majority of murders against union members worldwide occurs in Colombia, where corrupt bosses work hand in hand with the government and paramilitary forces to undermine the union movement.

On Dec. 15, striking GSOC members once again joined forces with the Colombia solidarity movement at NYU.



Several hundred students and activists protested the participation of right-wing Colombian president Alvaro Uribe Velez, along with former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, at a NYU panel discussion entitled “New Political Policies for the Americas.”

The protest announcement reads in part: “NYU is giving the stage to Kissinger and Uribe to lay out... policy that has and continues to open the way for union-busting, corporate dominance and manipulation.... It is no surprise that NYU gives a voice to such characters, because here at NYU the administration follows the same policy of busting unions for corporate gain. GSOC members will be protesting this event, letting NYU know that we will not tolerate giving a platform to war criminals and anti-union politicians.” □



# China: grave symptoms

Partisans of China’s revolutionary transformation and its rise from colonial slavery to the status of a rapidly developing, independent nation are justifiably wary of imperialist-inspired criticisms. No matter whether China pursues a left course, as it did in the days of Mao Zedong, or turns to the right and allows capitalist market mechanisms to operate inside the workers’ state, as it has done for the last three decades, the imperialists will never be satisfied until they can thoroughly penetrate China’s economic arteries and bend it to their will.

China’s growth in the last quarter century has been stupendous. However, it is important that progressives understand the debilitating side of these market reforms and the deep problems they are presenting for the workers and farmers of China, who have been the backbone of the revolution.

Two events this year illustrate the grave consequences of rapid, market-oriented industrialization. One was the awful disaster in February at the Sunjiawan coal mine in Fuxin, Liaoning province. Some 203 miners were killed and several dozen injured. It helped turn a spotlight once again on the terribly hazardous conditions faced by miners in China.

Last year, more than 5,000 Chinese coal miners were killed on the job in mining disasters. The Chinese government admits this came to a fatality rate per ton of coal that is 100 times that of the United States. China has many older mines and outmoded equipment. Its mining is labor intensive, compared with the more mechanized systems available in the imperialist countries. That would account for some of this, but the casualty rate is nevertheless staggering.

What especially concerns progressives is that the bulk of these deaths occurred in privately owned mines, where the profit motive is the driving force, and where rich owners can bribe officials to ignore safety violations. This quest for profit is likely to increase as China opens up more opportunities for foreign investment. For example, the British investment analysis firm Battelle says in a report called “China’s Coal Industry: Evolution and Opportunities,” that foreign capital can now find “huge opportunities for investment in China’s coal industry development.”

In 2003, says the Battelle report, China was the world’s second-largest exporter of coal. It is now ready to embark on “a vast program of expansion.” (Only a summary of this analysis of China’s coal industry is available online, at [www.battelle.org](http://www.battelle.org). The full report costs its corporate customers over \$850.)

Now comes the huge explosion on Nov. 13 at the Jilin Petrochemical plant in north-east China, followed by a spill of benzene, nitrobenzene and other highly toxic chemicals into the Songhua River. Millions of people were left without safe drinking water when, a week later, the spill reached the large city of Harbin downstream. The Chinese government mobilized to provide many tons of bottled water, but the damage to the population and the environment could still be enormous.

Because of a cover-up that lasted nearly a week, during which time the people along the river had little knowledge of the approaching danger, the top environmental official in China has been fired. Beijing made a formal apology to Russia, which lies downstream along the path of the poisonous chemicals. By late December, the Chinese were working around the clock in subfreez-

ing temperatures to build a containment dam above the Russian city of Khabarovsk that could reduce the spill’s impact.

Why did this explosion happen? No explanation has been given, but it is certainly likely that the heated pace of development of the chemical industry contributed to it. And there, too, foreign capital is involved.

A Dow Chemical news release on Sept. 29, 2004, announced that PetroChina Jilin Petrochemical Co. has started up a 128,700 MTA normal butanols plant in Jilin “using LP Oxo Process technology licensed from Davy Process Technology Ltd., London, in cooperation with Union Carbide Corp., a subsidiary of the Dow Chemical Co.”

Union Carbide is infamous for what it did to the people of Bhopal, India, in 1984, when a toxic gas leak from one of its plants there killed 8,000 people and injured 120,000 more.

China’s Communist Party has introduced market reforms, it says, in order to accelerate its development and build socialism. But the market is not just a stimulus; it creates a class of millionaires that corrupts the economic and political structures and divides the people, undermining the class solidarity that is the bedrock of socialist construction.

None of this can have escaped the attention of China’s leaders, who are skilled and experienced. They themselves have admitted that there were 74,000 “social disturbances” last year. But are there forces prepared to mobilize the advanced elements among the workers and farmers to engage in a struggle to turn the situation around politically and economically and push back the forces of capitalism, which are endangering the foundations of the workers’ state? The fate of one quarter of the world’s people is involved. □

# Hamas a big winner in West Bank election

By Michael Kramer

The results of elections held on Dec. 15 in the West Bank by the Palestinian Authority indicate that a realignment of political organizations has taken place. On Jan. 25, 2006, national elections will be held for the Palestinian Legislative Council.

While the elections are a barometer of public opinion, it must be understood that they were held while virtually all of Palestine is under a brutal Zionist occupation spearheaded by the U.S.-armed and financed Israeli Defense Forces, the Shabak secret police and gun-toting racist settlers.

Popular Palestinian political leaders like Marwan Barghouti and Ahmed Sadat have been imprisoned for years, while others like Abu Ali Mustafa, Sheik Ahmed Yassin and Dr. Abdel Aziz al-Rantissi have been victims of targeted assassinations.

The Islamic Resistance Movement, also known as Hamas, was the big winner, with victories in large towns and municipalities – Kabalan, Sanur, Yamun, Lahia, Bureij, Jenin, Qalqilyah, Nablus and El-Bireh—where over 1 million Palestinians live.

The Palestinian National Liberation Movement, or Fatah, has recently split into at least two factions. One of the factions is led by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. The split resulted in a breakdown of election-day efforts and the organization did not do as well as it had done in the past.

Also taking part in the elections were the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and the Palestinian

People’s Party (PPP).

Based on its political program, a vote for Hamas was a vote against the partition of Palestine and for militant resistance against Zionist occupation. The organization not only opposes the post-1967 Zionist settlements in the West Bank but also the pre-1948 Zionist settlements along the Mediterranean coast and in inland areas like the Galilee and Negev desert. Hamas runs many educational and charitable organizations in a highly efficient manner and has an armed wing called the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigade.

The U.S. and its European allies have put heavy pressure on Palestinians not to vote for Hamas in the coming national elections. Providing any form of material assistance to Hamas is illegal for U.S. citizens, and the Justice Department has targeted Hamas’s political supporters.

On Dec. 16, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution by a large majority, 397 to 17, threatening to withhold aid from the Palestinian Authority if Hamas is part of the next government. On Dec. 18 Javier Solana, the External Affairs Commissioner of the European Union, threatened that the E.U. would do the same unless Hamas recognized the Israeli settler state and ceased all military activities. Khalid Mishaal, the political leader of Hamas, denounced these threats.

A few days after the electoral victory of Hamas, Israeli Prime Minister and war criminal Ariel Sharon was hospitalized with a stroke. A Hamas victory next month could make things even worse for the health of the Israeli settler state. □

## Milosevic speaks

# New book gives different view of U.S. destruction of Yugoslavia

By Paddy Colligan

*“The Defense Speaks for History and the Future: Opening defense statement at The Hague by President of Yugoslavia Slobodan Milosevic with an introduction by Ramsey Clark” published by the International Action Center, 2005. 120 pp. \$19.95*

**BOOK  
REVIEW**

Does this sound like a book to miss? Well, even if you do buy it, would you let it languish on your bookshelf, without reading it? If you followed either course of action, you would miss out on a remarkable document. In fact, you would be reacting precisely as U.S. administrations from Bush Sr. to Clinton to Bush Shrub have planned. The demonization of President Milosevic has been so thorough that even those on the side of the working class may not expect him to be the source of historical insight. This is a pity, as he has been a major political figure for many years in Yugoslavia, a once significant workers’ state.

This remarkable little book gives a lucid overview of the complex history of the Balkans from World War II to the

present. It includes an analysis of the roots of the tragic inter-ethnic violence and the way inter-imperialist rivalries have played out in the (now) former Yugoslavia. At times it is quite detailed and examines arguments primarily familiar to those who have closely followed the region’s political twists and turns. More often it offers difficult to find and valuable background information that makes the region comprehensible.

Often books that are translations are awkward and convoluted. Not this book. It is an excellent and authoritative translation of Milosevic’s opening statement, which he delivered in Serbo-Croatian before the fraudulent International

Criminal Court for the former Yugoslavia. The writing is clear and even elegant. It is an achievement that Milosevic was able to produce this in his isolated incarceration in Scheveningen Prison in The Hague.

Part of Milosevic’s opening statement reads, “An untruthful, distorted picture of what happened in the territory of the former Yugoslavia was created in international public opinion over a long period of time with clear political intentions. These charges represent an unscrupulous manipulation of lies, a perversion of law, a defeat of morals, and an extreme distortion of history. Everything has been turned upside down in order to shield from responsibility those who are truly responsible for the tragic events, to render the wrong judgments and to draw the wrong conclusions about the nature and background of the war against Yugoslavia.”

It is worth our time to read Milosevic’s book so we can more fully understand what the U.S. has done to Yugoslavia—this scenario of systematically demonizing, dismantling and destroying countries that won’t do Washington’s bidding continues to be the modus operandi of U.S. governments. □



*The Defense Speaks for History and the Future: Statement at The Hague by President of Yugoslavia Slobodan Milosevic*  
Order from [www.Leftbooks.com](http://www.Leftbooks.com)

# As anti-war, pro-worker sentiment grows

# Racist attacks grip Australia

By Malcolm Cummins

A racist lynch mob numbering about 5,000, punched, beat, and stomped people who looked Middle Eastern or Muslim on a beach in Sydney, Australia, on Dec. 11. A woman had her head scarf torn off and had to flee down the beach to escape the frenzy. Some of the mob screamed to one young man, “Watch out, he’s got a bomb, he might blow himself up.”

In response to the attacks, 1,500 anti-racist protesters marched through central Melbourne Dec. 16, and on Dec. 17, 3,000 marched through Sydney in a demonstration organized by the National Union of Students. “Racist violence won’t be tolerated,” said student organizer Osmond Chiu.

The bigoted mob had been summoned to Cronulla Beach for a “bashing day” by cell-phone text messages, the tabloid press, and shock-jocks like radio station 2GB’s Alan Jones and Brian Wilshire, who helped advertise the “Aussie Pride” rally. “They are fueling racial division,” said Lebanese-Australian spokesman Keysar Trad about the shock-jocks.

Cronulla is located in Sutherland Shire, a white enclave surrounded by water. “The Shire” as it is known, has long had a reputation amongst Sydney-siders for the insularity and racism of some locals. Knowing this, neo-fascist groups like the Australia First Party and its youth wing, the Patriotic Youth League, mobilized for the day, turning out at least 100 provocateurs who helped whip up the mob.

Neo-fascist flyers called for a crack-down on “refugees, contract labour, overseas students and illegals,” according to

the Sydney Morning Herald. Even though they had been forewarned of the violent gathering, the police kept a relatively low profile, giving the mob virtually free rein.

The next night, when Lakemba Mosque was threatened with attack, 500 people came out to defend it. The mosque is the symbolic heart of Sydney’s Muslim community.

### Cops impose police state

State parliament was then called into emergency session to pass legislation that led to the imposition of a virtual police state in the Sydney area. The cops locked down most beaches in a 125-mile stretch north and south of Sydney. They had complete discretion to seize vehicles and cell phones, close businesses, particularly pubs, and conduct mass arrests. They didn’t go after the neo-fascists, however, as of this writing. Not one leader was known to have been arrested. It was later announced that the measures would be extended through the summer.

The beach communities in Sydney are mostly white, and like Cronulla have a reputation of being hostile to people of color. The Middle Eastern community is concentrated in Sydney’s southwest. On Sundays, people wanting to escape the summer heat drive or catch the bus east to the ocean. It was this movement of people that the police sought to stop, keeping the beaches almost entirely white. Thirty-five hundred extra cops were mobilized for Dec. 17 and 18.

Even this was not enough for State Premier Morris Iemma, who threatened to call another special parliamentary session to abolish bail. Not to be outdone, at least

four other states with major metropolitan areas announced similar measures, though on a smaller scale.

### Role of the federal government

The federal government of Prime Minister John Howard has created a poisonous environment, attacking immigrants, especially from the Middle East, Indigenous people and Muslims. Howard, who sent troops to Iraq to support Bush’s war, has a history of creating or manipulating events to push his reactionary, pro-war agenda. With opposition growing to his racist, anti-refugee policies during the 2001 election, he invented a story about immigrants on a ship throwing their children into the ocean in order to gain entry into Australia.

More recently, Howard announced an “anti-terrorism” alert, saying the government had specific information that an attack was about to occur. Five days later, 850 police mounted raids in Sydney and Melbourne and arrested 17 Muslim men on vague charges. It was later revealed that the police had been watching the men for 18 months.

The federal government just passed an anti-secession law, misnamed the “Anti-Terrorism Bill 2005.” According to the Sydney Morning Herald, “the laws were so wide they could be used to prosecute the ACTU secretary, Greg Combet, for his remarks urging opposition to the new industrial laws, and could be applied to those who had supported resistance movements including Fretilin {in East Timor—WW} and Nelson Mandela’s African National Congress.”

The new laws allow the authorities to

detain someone for a week of questioning, followed by 14 days of “preventative detention” and a year or more of house arrest. Any organization that “advocates”, “praises” or “counsels” a so-called terrorist act can be outlawed.

The Howard government is also proposing to ease restrictions on calling out the military. According to the World Socialist Web Site, the changes “could permit the armed forces to be called against many traditional forms of political protest, such as mass demonstrations, blockades and picket lines.”

Considered together, these actions by the various governmental bodies amount to a considerable strengthening of the repressive state apparatus, both the military and the police. They come as a resurgent union movement recently organized the biggest workers’ protest in Australian history, with over half a million hitting the streets to protest Howard’s changes in the industrial relations system, in favor of big business. The “war on terrorism” and the war in Iraq also remain deeply unpopular with broad masses of the population.

The events in Cronulla and the police response must be seen in this light. Whatever the role of the government in the racist attacks is ultimately shown to be, and only an independent investigation can determine this, the authorities have used them to establish police state-like conditions in wide areas of the country. If there were a general strike or some other form of militant mass protest, would the Howard government seek the imposition of martial law in Australia? The movement there will need to be on guard against this possibility. □

## Protests in the streets

# Farmers, workers confront the WTO

By LeiLani Dowell

Thousands converged in Hong Kong from around the world to protest the six-day meeting of the World Trade Organization which ended Dec. 18. After fierce battles in the streets surrounding the Hong Kong Convention Center where the meeting was held, police arrested and detained over 900 protesters. The Hong Kong People’s Alliance reports that some 60 demonstrators suffered injuries at the hands of the police; three were hospitalized.

According to Action Aid, the WTO “sets the rules of international trade and also acts as a policeman, forcing countries to open up their markets under the threat of economic and political sanctions.”

An eyewitness report from Pranjali Tiwari and David Solnit on Dec. 17 describes the protests as “the most intense street battle that we have ever seen.... Farmers, workers, women’s organizations, fisher folk, Hong Kong youth, migrants and other movement people from Korea, across Asia and around the world marched on, broke through several police lines to less than a block from the site of the WTO conference center and laid siege to it until we were dispersed with teargas and mass arrests tonight. ...

“Contrary to what media reports might say, the confrontations have been anything but chaotic. Korean groups led veritable battles against the police with their well-organized, incredibly courageous and militant resistance.... The police were out-organized, inexperienced, and unable

to contain the huge numbers of people that broke through their lines on numerous fronts in the Wan Chai district.... Hong Kong residents, increasingly supportive of anti-WTO demonstrations throughout this week, lined the streets, some cheering, giving thumbs-up, and even handing out snacks and water to demonstrators....

“The migrant workers had a mobile sound system and alternately led chants and songs in Bahasa Indonesia, English, and Cantonese.... The Koreans were tight units of seasoned activists, who had been involved in the fiercest and most militant worker, student and farmer struggles in the world over many decades. They were both intensely organized, like an army without the rigidity, and very politically focused – chanting and singing their message and wearing clear messages on their matching ‘WTO Kills Farmers’ vests, hats, headbands, and many with red signs attached to their front and back.”

Tiwari and Solnit’s report also includes text from a document handed out by the



WTO protest in Hong Kong.



Banner from Korean Peasants League.

Korean Peasants League – “Citizens of Hong Kong! Food is not a commodity. Agriculture is not a business opportunity. If agriculture is liberalized, we will be pushed down the slippery slope of liberalizing education, services and everything people need to enjoy as basic rights will be taken away and provided only to the wealthy.... Defending agriculture is the way to defend our collective future” – and the Assembly of the Poor in Thailand – “We are Assembly of the Poor, an alliance from Thailand representing 19 networks of struggling poor and urban people, farmers, fisherfolk, people living with HIV/AIDS, workers, and landless peasants. We are affected by the trade liberalization and are made losers in the unfair game that those people in the convention center are trying to make even worse. We are in Hong Kong to make our voice heard and call for a fair world.... It is not easy for us to be here in Hong Kong; in a different climate, with a different language, leaving our families behind. We have no choice.... despite

obstacles, we vow to move forward. We, Assembly of the Poor, will work together with La Via Campesina, to stop this unfair negotiation until the very end.”

In an attempt to prevent the collapse of talks that occurred at the WTO meeting two years ago in Cancún, Mexico, leaders of the richest imperialist nations made a few paltry concessions to poorer nations, their farmers and peasants, such as an agreement to get rid of tariffs or quotas on imports for 97% of goods from the world’s poorest countries. The 3% left out of this agreement, however, includes key products in many poor countries, such as cotton.

While the United States, European Union and Japan agreed to provide billions in development aid, most of the aid is in the form of loans, not grants, has in actuality already been promised, and will no doubt be tied to the WTO’s “restructuring” rules for the countries in need. And while the text on service privatization was scaled back somewhat thanks to the intervention of Venezuela and Cuba, it is predicted that the attempt to make privatization of services mandatory for most developing countries will be raised again at the next meeting in Geneva.

In a statement denouncing the meeting’s outcome, the South African labor federation COSATU said, “The developed countries once again failed to extend a hand of solidarity to the poor.... The situation will remain that it would be better to be a cow in Japan, subsidized for \$7 per day, than to be a human being living in Africa.” □



## Jurado en la Florida rechaza acusaciones antiárabe

# Cómo fracasó una acusación falsificada del gobierno

Por Dianne Mathiowetz  
Atlanta

Un mes antes de que los EEUU librara su guerra contra Irak, el entonces Fiscal General John Ashcroft anunció personalmente el 20 de febrero del 2003 que el gobierno había sometido una acusación contra el Dr. Sami Al-Arian, declarando que él era “el líder en Norteamérica del Jihad Islámico Palestino (PIJ)”.

Ashcroft dijo que la detención de Al-Arian fue “crucial en la guerra contra el terrorismo” y dio crédito a la Ley Patriótica por haber facilitado el caso contra el profesor de la Florida. Sus declaraciones fueron emitidas en vivo por la cadena CNN como noticia del momento.

Él insinuó que el público estaría más seguro con Al-Arian tras las rejas, asociándolo demagógicamente con Osama bin Laden y Saddam Hussein. La administración de Bush esperaba poder encarcelar bajo acusación falsa a este personaje solidario con el pueblo palestino. Ese plan fue echado por tierra el 6 de diciembre, cuando un jurado de Tampa, Florida absolvió a Al-Arian y sus coacusados de la mayoría de las acusaciones en su contra.

Al-Arian fue absuelto en 8 de las 17 acusaciones, incluso la de conspiración para mutilar y asesinar, y la de proporcionar apoyo material para la Jihad Islámica. Dos de los coacusados, Ghassan Ballut y Sameeh Hammoudeh, fueron absueltos de todas las acusaciones, y el empresario de Chicago Hatem Fariz fue exonerado de 25 de las 33 acusaciones. El jurado no pudo ponerse de acuerdo sobre las demás acusaciones, pero la mayoría del jurado favorecía la exoneración.

En los EEUU y alrededor del mundo, reportes periodísticos comentaron sobre la derrota que el veredicto representaba para el gobierno de los EEUU en sus intentos por silenciar la disensión en este país.

Fueron las reglas laxas de la Ley Patriótica las que permitieron a los investigadores presentar información secreta captada por la vigilancia en el exterior en un proceso criminal doméstico.

La persecución y vigilancia gubernamental de Sami Al-Arian comenzó hace 10 años.

Nacido de padres palestinos en Kuwait, Al-Arian emigró a los EEUU siendo estudiante en 1975. Como profesor respetado de ingeniería informática en la Universidad del Sur de la Florida (USF por las siglas en inglés) en Tampa desde 1986, Al-Arian era un líder reconocido de la comunidad musulmana. Había fundado una mezquita, desarrollado una escuela e iniciado un centro de investigación. Era muy conocido por su apoyo al pueblo palestino y su lucha para acabar con la ocupación israelí, hablando en reuniones y conferencias a través del país.

Irónicamente, durante la dura competencia de las elecciones presidenciales en la Florida en el 2000, el académico fue buscado por la campaña de Bush para influenciar a los votantes árabes y musulmanes en apoyo a los candidatos Republicanos.

El FBI interceptó su teléfono por más de

nueve años, y dos veces hizo redadas en su casa y en sus oficinas, incautando docenas de cajas llenas de objetos personales.

En 1996, la entonces presidenta de la USF, Betty Castor, puso a Al-Arian en licencia personal luego de conocer que él estaba bajo investigación por el Departamento de Justicia.

Organizaciones académicas vinieron en su defensa. Dos años después, cuando el FBI admitió que no tenía bases para acusarle, Al-Arian fue restaurado a su posición como profesor con permanencia.

Casi de inmediato, el gobierno detuvo a su cuñado Mazen Al-Najar, quien también trabajaba en la universidad, y sin acusaciones le encarcelaron basado en “evidencia secreta” por tres años.

Al-Arian trabajó apasionadamente para lograr la libertad de Al-Najar. Estaba a punto de lograr que el Congreso pasara legislación prohibiendo la “evidencia secreta” cuando los ataques del 9/11 ocurrieron.

Después de que las cortes decidieron que se tenía que liberar a Al-Najaf, éste fue deportado en agosto del 2002.

Elementos derechistas y a favor de Israel, incluyendo a periodistas locales del Tampa Tribune y a Bill O'Reilly del noticiero Fox, a pesar de la falta de evidencia, públicamente intentaron asociar a Al-Arian con actos terroristas – no sólo en el Medio Oriente, sino también en la explosión en la Ciudad de Oklahoma – en una campaña implacable para difamarlo.

Por ejemplo, el Tampa Tribune ha publicado más de 700 artículos sobre Al-Arian y su perspectiva a favor de Palestina a un promedio de un artículo cada cinco días durante 10 años. Después de su detención en febrero del 2003, Al-Arian y su coacusado Mammoudeh, fueron encarcelados en la sección de seguridad máxima de la prisión federal en Coleman, Florida. Él fue encarcelado incomunicado en una pequeña celda solitaria con luz encendida constantemente, le fue negado el contacto regular con su familia, le restringieron la práctica de su religión, y le ponían grilletes en las manos y en los pies las veces que le permitían reunirse de forma limitada con sus abogados defensores. Hasta tuvo que demandar a los oficiales federales en las cortes para poder recibir lápiz y papel para ayudar en su defensa legal.

### 10 años de vigilancia

Aunque el gobierno había estado vigilando y observando sus actividades por casi 10 años, el Departamento de Justicia le dijo al juez dirigente del proceso, el Juez de Distrito James Moody, que necesitaba por lo menos dos años más para preparar su caso.

El muy publicado proceso comenzó el 6 de junio del 2005, casi dos años y medio después de la detención de Al-Arian en las tempranas horas de la mañana en su casa en la Florida.

Durante seis meses los fiscales del Departamento de Justicia presentaron unos 80 testigos e introdujeron 400 piezas de evidencia, casi todas eran transcripciones editadas de más de las 20,000 horas de conversaciones telefónicas grabadas. Muchas de las cintas habían sido grabadas antes del 1995, cuando el Jihad Islámico Palestino fuera incluido por vez primera en la lista de “terroristas” mantenida por el gobierno.

Testigos israelíes de los bombardeos atribuidos al PIJ fueron traídos a Tampa para atestiguar. Videos de estallidos en autobuses fueron mostrados al jurado, a pesar de que la fiscalía estaba de acuerdo en que los acusados no tenían nada que ver ni con la planificación ni la ejecución de estos ataques.

Bajo contra interrogatorio, la defensa expuso la falta de evidencia que conectara a los cuatro hombres con alguna actividad terrorista.

El 27 de octubre los abogados de Al-Arian sorprendieron al tribunal. William Moffit le dijo al jurado que la defensa terminaría el caso sin llamar a ningún testigo ni presentar ninguna evidencia.

“Porque hay un documento llamado la Constitución de los Estados Unidos . . . que protege el derecho de hablar del Dr. Al-Arian y el gobierno no ha probado que el Dr. Al-Arian ha hecho otra cosa más que hablar. . . El hecho de que el Dr. Al-Arian sea palestino no le quita sus derechos civiles.”

Trece días después, la decisión del jurado le causó gran perturbación a la administración de Bush. Mientras los cuatro acusados estaban de pie en la sala del tribunal llena de miembros de familia y amistades que les apoyaban, oyeron el “no culpable” una y otra vez

mientras se leían las acusaciones.

Todos los jurados que fueron entrevistados por Meg Laughlin, periodista del St. Petersburg Times, mencionaron que no encontraron evidencia de crimen en el voluminoso informe presentado por el gobierno. La abogada fiscal Cherie Krigsman había exhortado al jurado a “confiar en ellos” aduciendo que existía evidencia que mostraba que los acusados pertenecían a una célula “terrorista” que operaba dentro de los Estados Unidos.

Un jurado dijo “Estuvimos a punto de exonerar a Al-Arian de cuatro acusaciones más cuando el juez nos paró.” El juez Moody dijo que una miembro del jurado le había mandado una nota diciéndole que se sentía “coercida” por los demás en el panel.

“Eso nos sorprendió,” dijo otra miembro vietnamita-americana.

Todd, un camionero de 40 años, agregó, “Si nos hubiéramos quedado y trabajado . . . los hubiéramos exonerado de todo menos de la acusación de fraude migratorio.”

Los fiscales federales ahora están considerando un nuevo juicio de Al-Arian y Fariz por las acusaciones estancadas. La condena por una acusación de conspiración de fraude organizado conlleva una sentencia posible de 20 años de prisión. Dicen que no hay un límite de tiempo para anunciar su decisión.

La Agencia de Ejecución de Inmigración y Aduana (ICE) ha dicho que va a proceder con audiencias de deportación si Al-Arian fuera liberado de la cárcel bajo fianza o si el Departamento de Justicia se niega a revisar el caso.

El abogado de defensa Moffit declaró que cualquier esfuerzo para deportar a su cliente sería “totalmente vengativo”, ya que no ha sido condenado por ningún crimen.

Sin embargo, en estos casos muy publicados de “terrorismo”, luego de la detención de miles de hombres árabes y musulmanes desde el 9/11, la inmensa mayoría de los acusados no han sido encontrados culpables de ningún crimen y sin embargo fueron deportados a base de tecnicismos de inmigración.

Como Al-Arian, ellos sufrieron meses e incluso años de encarcelamiento, difamación pública, separación de sus familias, pérdida de sus casas y trabajo, negación de sus derechos civiles y angustia mental y física intencional por culpa de una camarilla de ideólogos derechistas en busca de una agenda política.

El gobierno contaba con el miedo y el racismo para condenar a Al-Arian y sus coacusados, pero la desconfianza del público sobre la política de la administración de Bush desde la guerra en Irak y el Huracán Katrina definitivamente dio a los jurados un contexto en el cual juzgar las perspectivas políticas de los activistas palestinos.

El jurado estuvo de acuerdo con la recapitulación de Moffit: “Este caso es sobre el derecho de hablar del Dr. Al-Arian, de nuestro derecho a escuchar lo que él tiene que decir, y del intento de los poderosos a silenciarlo.” □

