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U.S. rulers admit to Iraq disaster

While Iraqis resist occupation, masses in the U.S. say 'TROOPS OUT NOW!'

By John Catalinotto

When the two top U.S. generals in Iraq fly back to Washington for emergency meetings; when their colleagues in Baghdad paint a bleak picture of the latest U.S. offensive; when the New York Times fills its editorial space demanding Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's head and laying out its own Iraq program; when top military strategists say Washington lost the war more than three years ago; and when everyone in the establishment starts talking about an Iraq version of the Tet Offensive, it is apparent that the arrogant U.S. military assault on Iraq is ending in a debacle for imperialism.

Even the ever-confident George W. Bush has ordered his press secretary, Tony Snow, to relegate the slogan "Stay the course" to the public-relations trashcan. Now the slogan is "Stay until the job is done."

The Pentagon has been up front with its chagrin. When the generals announced their plan months ago to seize control of Baghdad, they said it would be the decisive battle of the war.

Their conclusion now is that the last four months of fighting in Baghdad have been an unmitigated disaster. An Oct. 19 report in the New York Times had revealed: "In one of the most somber assessments of the war by American commanders, a statement read by the spokesman, Maj. Gen. William B. Caldwell IV, said the campaign had been marked by increasing attacks on American troops and a spike in combat deaths." By Oct. 24, with a week still to go, U.S. combat deaths had reached 90 for the month.

"General Caldwell said American troops were being forced to return to neighborhoods, like Dora in southwestern Baghdad, that they had sealed off and cleared as part of the security campaign," said the Times article. It added, "The general's remarks, unusual for their candor and unvarnished portrayal of bad news, appeared to mark a new setback for the American military effort."

Not to be outdone by the Pentagon, Alberto Fernandez, director of public diplomacy in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at the State Department, told Al-Jazeera, "We tried to do our best but I think there is much room for criticism because, undoubt-

edly, there was arrogance and there was stupidity from the United States in Iraq." Fernandez, though he later recanted, said that the U.S. was now ready to talk with any group in Iraq except Al-Qaeda if it would help resolve the situation there.

Key U.S. military strategist Harlan Ullman, who taught Gen. Colin Powell and who is now at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said in an interview with Time magazine for its Oct. 19 issue: "We [Washington] lost control of events on the ground probably in April or May of 2003. And it's taken a long time for that recognition to dawn in the White House. The president and the administration have refused to recognize reality. Iraq is a disaster."

The generals, officials and analysts have gone further than either Republican or Democratic Party politicians in providing a frank picture of the Iraq occupation, with no end in sight. They have more accurately reflected the facts on the ground.

U.S. casualties rise, resistance grows confident

Iraqi police units, when ordered to Baghdad from other parts of Iraq, simply refuse and disappear. Their conduct is a reflection of the overwhelming sentiment of the Iraqi people, who even in public opinion polls say they want the U.S. and British out.

U.S. troops are stretched so thin that the generals have to maneuver to raise troop levels. They extend a unit's stay by a month or two while bringing in new troops from the U.S. This way they've kept U.S. troop levels in Iraq above 140,000.

On Oct. 24, Gen. George Casey, the four-star general in charge of all "coalition" ground troops in Iraq, raised the possibility of sending even more forces there to retake the offensive, but he hasn't explained where they will come from.

The Iraqi resistance forces reported that on Oct. 10 they launched mortars and rockets that started a fire at Camp Falcon, a U.S. base on the southern outskirts of Baghdad that held a major U.S. ammunition depot. According to BBC and an Al-Jazeera video, the fire set off 30 to 40 explosions throughout the night, some lighting up the entire sky so brightly that Iraqis

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NEW YORK PROTESTORS: 'Si se puede'



People of all ages take to the streets for immigrant rights Oct. 21. See page 5 for article.

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To protest exclusion

Anti-war candidate crashes debate

By Detroit Workers World bureau

David Sole crashed the “Republican-only” debate at the Detroit Economic Club on Oct. 18 while his supporters demonstrated outside. Sole, the Green Party candidate for U.S. Senate on the Stop the War Slate, had filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission regarding his exclusion from the event.

Before the official debate began, Sole joined 500 people at the luncheon. After devouring some chocolate cake, he then jumped onstage with microphone in hand and addressed the stunned audience: “I’m the only anti-war candidate! Why am I excluded from this debate? What is the Economic Club afraid of?”

Sole was promptly set upon by security goons and escorted from the venue as he continued to shout his anti-war message. An ABC local TV affiliate broadcast the scene with Sole at the start of its coverage of the debate.

While the corporate-controlled media continue to boycott news of Sole’s election campaign, the Michigan Citizen, a progressive weekly African American community newspaper, officially endorsed his candidacy in its editorial which read:

“Voters owe it to themselves, their children and ancestors to NOT vote a straight Democratic ticket this Nov. 7 election. The first name to skip over is Debbie Stabenow. She has no right to take the seat as senator from Michigan. She sits as the senator for banking, finance and the George Bush war machine. But she does not represent the working person, whether poor or middle class. When Congress pushed to reward the banking community and the credit card companies with a stricter bankruptcy law, she was right there to reward the creditors and do in the consumer. Thanks to her vote in the Senate, everyone struggling with

rising bills, stagnant wages and additional taxes and fees is in deep trouble and with the sometimes needed remedy of bankruptcy all but out of reach. That vote was no isolated incident. She voted for the war in Iraq, a war draining billions from public needs—health care, education, decent housing, environmental justice and worker protections. Death over domestic needs, that’s how Debbie voted and continues to vote.

“Go directly to the Green Party portion of the ballot and cast your vote for David Sole for Senate, a longtime activist for peace and justice. Your vote will send the world a message. You may not be on the winning side in November, but you surely will be on the winning side of history. David Sole for Senate.”

Two other Stop the War Slate candidates took part in debates with their opponents on Oct. 18. Kristen Hamel, Green Party candidate for state representative in Detroit’s 1st District, challenged the Republican incumbent and Democratic candidate at a forum sponsored by the Grosse Pointe League of Women Voters.

In her opening remarks Hamel said: “The state legislature needs to enact immediate emergency measures to turn things around for working and poor families. Let’s start with a moratorium on utility shutoffs, evictions, foreclosures, plant closings and layoffs. Let’s make Michigan attractive to workers with jobs at living wages, rebuilding our cities and towns, with free medical care; let’s offer equally funded top-notch public education and affordable housing. Let’s start to put the people’s needs first. How do we pay for this?”

“Our legislature needs to become a leading voice for demanding back Michigan’s share of the Pentagon military budget, over \$15 billion a year. We need to demand

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Hearings on Con Ed outage

By Mary Owen
Queens, N.Y.

In response to a demand by the Western Queens Power for the People Campaign (PFPC), the New York State Public Service Commission (PSC) has scheduled four additional public hearings about July’s week-long Con Ed power outage. These hearings will take place in the working-class, immigrant communities of Sunnyside, Woodside, Astoria and Long Island City.

However, a conspiracy of silence by Con Ed, the PSC and the media may keep news of the hearings from reaching the affected communities.

The PFPC demanded the extra hearings because the PSC’s earlier hearings in August were held while affected neighborhoods were still recovering from the outage. There was also poor publicity and the announcements on the hearings weren’t translated into other languages.

The state agency, run by high-paid commissioners appointed by New York Governor George Pataki, has again done little to publicize the upcoming hearings. While providing some translators at the hearings, the PSC again issued English-only posters that are not translated into the many languages read and spoken throughout Western Queens.

Con Edison, a billion-dollar energy monopoly that recently ran two-page ads in Queens newspapers tout-

ing its role in helping the area recover, has not even run a postage-stamp-sized notice about the public hearings. Instead, the main culprit in the outage issued its own 600-page report last week claiming that a series of simultaneous, unrelated events—that were not Con Ed’s fault—somehow came together to cause the outage, which could have been a lot worse but for Con Ed’s response (ad nauseam).

Despite limited resources, PFPC has produced its own literature and community volunteers are going door-to-door to get flyers posted. But help is needed to get the word out so the community—which endured days without lights, air conditioning, refrigeration and suffered many losses from the outage—can raise its voice at the hearings.

On Nov. 2 at P.S. 11 at 54-25 Skillman Ave. in Woodside, there will be an afternoon education forum 4 p.m. until 5 p.m.; a public hearing 5 p.m. until 6 p.m.; an evening education forum 7 p.m. until 8 p.m. and another public hearing 8 p.m. until 9 p.m. Translators will be provided for those who speak Korean, Spanish and Turkish. Similar hearings were held on Oct. 25.

Go to www.powerforthepeople.info to find out how to help spread the word about the Nov. 2 public hearing. □



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Muslim woman victim of racist atrocity

By Brenda Ryan

The brutal murder of a Muslim woman in Fremont, Calif., has sent a wave of fear through the city's Afghani community. On Oct. 19, Alia Ansari was walking down a residential street with her 3-year-old daughter when a man stopped his car, stepped out and shot her once in the head. He then got back in the car and sped away.

Ansari's family and community believe

her killing was a hate crime and that she was targeted because she was wearing a hijab, the traditional Muslim headscarf. The San Francisco Bay Area chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations held a news conference the next day to condemn Ansari's killing and demand that the police investigate it as a hate crime.

"We call on the police to investigate this issue thoroughly and on a timely basis, and to determine whether this was a hate crime or not, especially in light of the actual circumstances of the crime, and in light of the current political climate," CAIR-SFBA Civil Rights Coordinator Abdul Rahman

Hamamsy said in a statement.

Ansari, 37, had emigrated from Afghanistan in 1986. She lived in Fremont, one of the largest Afghani communities in the United States, with a business district dubbed "Little Kabul."

Ansari was walking to a nearby elementary school to pick up her five other children when she was shot. The media reported on Oct. 21 that the police had detained a man as a "person of interest" in the killing but had not charged him.

CAIR, a Muslim civil liberties group, issued a report earlier in the year noting that anti-Muslim hate crime complaints

had increased 30 percent in 2005 over the previous year. The group processed 1,972 civil rights complaints of harassment, violence and discrimination, and 153 reports of anti-Muslim hate crimes, an 8.6 percent increase from 2004.

For the Muslim community, Ansari's murder is a result of anti-Muslim bigotry. "Justice will not be served by merely catching the killer," Ali Ansari's brother Hassan Ansari told the San Francisco Chronicle. "We have to figure out how to stop these kinds of things from happening. ... American society is what feeds people's ignorance." □

Anti-war debate

Continued from page 2

the U.S. out of Iraq and bring the troops home now. It's time to stop the war and tax the corporations and use this money to fund jobs and human needs here at home."

'Stop racism & anti-gay bashing'

In East Lansing, Michigan State University trustee candidate Lauren Elizabeth Spencer of the Green Party anti-war slate forced her opponents to take an affirmative stand on the issue of defending domestic-partner benefits for lesbian and gay university employees.

Spencer, an MSU sophomore and the youngest candidate, also spoke on the importance of including gender identity and expression in the campus civil-rights code, an issue which only the incumbents seemed to have knowledge of. Tying in the issue of war, Spencer told the audience, "Michigan's share of the cost of the Iraq war, over \$8 billion, could fund over 425,000 full-time four-year college scholarships in Michigan."

David Sole issued a press advisory on Oct. 20 on the death of 28-year-old Michael J. Sandy, a gay Black man, who died after suffering a brutal anti-gay, racist attack by multiple white assailants in Brooklyn, N.Y. Sole said: "The Foley-gate story dominated broadcast news coverage and headlines in the days prior to this unprovoked attack. [S]ensational and bigoted campaigning ... encourages murderous attacks and hate crimes like the one that took the life of Mr. Sandy, the day after his 29th birthday.

"Both the Democratic and Republican parties use racist and/or gay-bashing tactics or fail to vigorously condemn them. In 1988, the Reagan/Bush Sr. campaign ran the notoriously racist Willie Horton ad campaign. The phony 'family values' campaigning against equal marriage rights for lesbians and gay men in the 2004 elections undermined 'domestic partner' benefits for workers and inserted discrimination in state constitutions, even here in Michigan."

Sole continued: "Racist and anti-LGBT attacks are happening here in Michigan, too. The most publicized recent attacks just in the Detroit area include the robbery and beating of a transgender woman, and shooting of a gay man in July 2006. On Jan. 10, 2006, 31-year-old Salvagio Vonatti of Windsor, Canada, was shot in the head outside a club in Detroit. According to the Windsor Star newspaper, in 2004 Michigan ranked third in the United States for hate crimes. Out of 556 cases, 73 were attacks based on anti-LGBT bigotry. I call on Debbie Stabenow and Mike Bouchard, and all candidates, to publicly and forcefully condemn racist and anti-LGBT bashing."

For more information on the Sole for U.S. Senate campaign and all Stop the War Slate and Green Party candidates, visit www.stopthewarslate.org and www.migreens.org, or email campaign@stopthewarslate.org. Donations can be made payable to Sole for Senate Campaign, 5922 Second Ave., Detroit, MI 48202. □

Women activists organize for reproductive rights

By Workers World Detroit bureau

A forum/fundraiser for Choice and Equality was held in Detroit on Oct. 21. The event, co-sponsored by the Detroit Action Network For Reproductive Rights (DANFORR) and Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan, was chaired by DANFORR activist and women's clinic administrator Shalece Daniels.

Dessa Cosma, a community organizer with Planned Parenthood, spoke on the status of reproductive rights in Michigan. Gwen Winston of One United Michigan

talked about the crucial struggle to defeat Michigan's Proposal 2, a measure that would ban affirmative action.

DANFORR member Kris Hamel spoke on the struggle in South Dakota to defeat Referred Law 6 and overturn the near-total ban on abortions in that state.

Susan Farquhar, a leading DANFORR organizer, read a message to the audience from the South Dakota Campaign for Healthy Families, the pro-choice coalition leading the fight in that state. She also read a solidarity message from the Metro Detroit National Organization for Women chapter.

Lauren Spencer, Green Party candidate for Michigan State University Board of Trustees, addressed the importance of the LGBT struggle and its relation to reproductive freedom. A lively discussion on the links between these important issues took place after the talks.

The audience—made up of workers, the unemployed, students and activists—took up a collection to send to the South Dakota Campaign for Healthy Families. Funds are still urgently needed and can be sent to SDCHF, P.O. Box 1484, Sioux Falls, SD 57101-1484. □

Feminism & war conference condemns U.S. imperialism

By Minnie Bruce Pratt
Syracuse, N.Y.

Some 1,000 women and men, including many young people, defied torrential rain to fill the chapel at Syracuse University Oct. 19 for a forum that kicked off a conference on "Feminism & War."

Featured speakers that night included antiwar activist Cindy Sheehan, whose son Casey was killed in the war against Iraq, and anti-militarist author Cynthia Enloe. The crowd applauded when Sheehan said President George W. Bush is a war criminal who should be locked up and never see the light of day.

During the question and answer session, those in the audience, including working-class individuals, expressed deep frustration with the war. One young man asked: "I work two jobs and my mother works three. How do we stop the war?"

The conference, which continued through Oct. 21, addressed that question with a combination of academic and activist panels and speakers. Plenary speakers included prison abolition activist and former Black Panther Angela Davis; former African National Congress member Patricia McFadden; and Margo Okazawa-Rey, who had just returned from a year of working in the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling in Palestine.

Professor Shahnaz Khan of Wilfrid Laurier University in Ontario, Canada, presented a comprehensive view of how Afghan women's lives had worsened catastrophically since that country's secular socialist government was overthrown in 1979 through CIA machinations.

Academic panels ranged from presentations on anti-militarist organizing to sessions on feminism and disability in wartime, as well as the effects of neocolonial and imperialist occupation. In a focused



PHOTO: JENNA LLOYD

Left to right, Minnie Bruce Pratt, Berta Joubert-Ceci, Nellie Bailey, LeiLani Dowell.

discussion group, women of color veterans spoke out for peace; they were joined by male veterans as well.

Activist panels included representatives from local Syracuse organizations, including from Vera House, the domestic violence and sexual assault shelter, and from the local Muslim, African American, and Latin@ communities.

Particularly well received was the panel called "Every Bomb Dropped on Iraq Falls on U.S. Cities." Speaking on the impact of imperialist war on women within the United States were Nellie Hester Bailey of the Harlem Tenants Council, Berta Joubert-Ceci of the International Action Center-Philadelphia, and LeiLani Dowell of FIST—Fight Imperialism, Stand Together. The panel's title was based on a phrase from the 1971 Riverside Church speech by the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.: "Every bomb dropped on Viet Nam falls on Harlem."

Anti-war political currents present included Code Pink, Global Women's

Strike, Gold Star Families for Peace, the International Action Center (New York and Philadelphia), School of the Americas Watch, United for Peace and Justice, and Veterans for Peace. An antiwar rally organized by the Syracuse Peace Council drew 200 people on Oct. 20 outside the conference venue.

An ad hoc committee presented the conference with a call to "End U.S. Wars Now!" The statement read in part: "The pretext of 'the rights of women' has been and is being used by the current U.S. administration to justify its wars of aggression. We, participants at the 2006 Feminism and War conference ... condemn the neocolonial, racist, and imperialist wars launched by the U.S. ... We are in solidarity with all who are suffering from the consequences of U.S. and U.S.-funded military aggression."

The 450 conference attendees overwhelmingly endorsed the call to action.

Minnie Bruce Pratt was an organizer of the Feminist & War conference and a speaker in its closing session.

ON THE PICKETLINE

by Sue Davis

Mass. nurses strike & picket

Nurses at UMass Memorial—University Campus plan to strike Oct. 26, after attempts to negotiate a fair contract failed. Nearly all the 830 registered nurses approved a strike in late September. The hospital, which is scheduled to post \$47 million in profits in 2006, on top of \$94 million in 2005, is demanding concessions of up to \$8,000 a year in wages and benefits.

The contract offered will drastically increase health insurance costs and eliminate the nurses' pension plan as a benefit. The Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA) estimates that as a result, retirement savings will be cut by 35 percent; many nurses could lose as much as \$104,000.

To add insult to injury, after demanding concessions from the nurses, the hospital announced a 38 percent pay hike for its CEO and \$68 million in capital improvements for hospital buildings. Clearly, its priorities are making profits, not serving patients.

Elsewhere in the state, more than 1,000 registered nurses at Brigham & Women's Hospitals in Boston held an informational picket on Oct. 12. The MNA called it the largest picket in its history.

The nurses, who have been negotiating a new contract since July, protested the hospital's failure to recruit and retain adequate staff to safely care for patients. Though the hospital's profits increased by more than 75 percent in 2005 and by another \$42 million through the second quarter of 2006, management only offered the 2,400 nurses a 1.5 percent pay hike, and it wants them to pay for it by cutting their sick time benefits. That would make the hospital's pay scale 10 percent below that at comparable facilities.

The nurses' contract expired on Sept. 30 but has been extended until the next negotiating session on Oct. 23. If talks aren't successful, the nurses will vote to strike.

Harley-Davidson workers reject contract

Members of Steelworkers Local 2-209 overwhelmingly gave thumbs down to the concessions contract offered by Harley-Davidson on Oct. 16.

The 1,500 workers who assemble the famous upscale motorcycles in Milwaukee refused a contract that included a pay cut of about one-third for workers hired in 2007, an end to cost-of-living adjustments for all workers in 2008 and cutbacks in healthcare benefits and pensions. Workers at plants in Pennsylvania and Missouri are represented by the Machinists union.

While management says it needs the cuts to stay competitive, the workers don't believe the company, which will likely post \$1 billion in profits in 2006. A worker, who requested to remain anonymous because of fear of reprisals, told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, "They try to portray themselves as being different from most companies. They're no different. They're greedy." Other workers said they would be willing to accept concessions only if Harley were in financial trouble. (Oct. 17)

"I'm really proud of the members. I really am," said another worker. "There comes a time when you have to stand up and say enough's enough." He noted that the union agreed to contract concessions in 2003. The current contract expires in 2008.

Northwest flight attendants go to court

Northwest flight attendants, who were forbidden to strike by an Aug. 25 preliminary injunction, filed a 65-page brief with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit on Oct. 12 appealing the injunction. At least 50 pages of the brief cite legal precedents showing that a strike in response to a contract rejection during a bankruptcy case is not barred by the Railway Labor Act nor by Section 1113 of the Bankruptcy Code. For a copy of the brief, go to nwaafa.org.

Meanwhile NWA flight attendants, represented by AFA-CWA, and their supporters are continuing to implement CHAOS—Create Havoc Around Our System—by holding informational picket lines at airports around the country. Stay tuned.

Flight attendants stage Halloween protest

US Airways flight attendants, also represented by AFA-CWA, plan to picket at seven airports on Halloween to protest stagnant wages, sluggish contract negotiations and management's "nothing-for-the-workers" negotiating stance.

Flight attendants have had "massive pay cuts" since 2002, noted an Oct. 16 union press release. While executives at US Airways gave themselves two raises in 2006, on top of pocketing millions in stock options, they're refusing to give raises to the flight attendants. "It's been all treats for management and an empty bag for flight attendants," noted the release.

Picketing is tentatively scheduled at airports in Boston, Charlotte, New York/LaGuardia, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C. For the final schedule, check www.afanet.org. □

Locked out, on strike

Fed up workers are 'digging in'

By Martha Grevatt
Cleveland

The Great Lakes Region, including Ohio, is considered an area of high union density. It was pivotal to the organizing drives of the 1930s and 1940s. Thus, it may come as a surprise that here, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, hourly compensation for workers in private industry lags behind the national average. Clearly the decades-long anti-labor assault has taken its toll.

However, a fighting mood is beginning to emerge throughout Ohio. "It is tough, but the resolve is clear," stated Larry Vellequette, spokesperson for the Toledo Council of Newspaper Unions. "We're basically digging in," remarked David Prentice, representing USWA Local 2 on strike against Goodyear.

In response to AK Steel's demand that locked-out workers return to work alongside scabs, International Association of Machinists (IAM) member Ed Barker said it would be "not safe at all."

Two hundred workers have been locked out by the Toledo Blade since August, and another 400 are working without a contract.

StoptheBlade.com lists Blade

management's Ten Worst Demands. These include a 13 percent pay cut, \$400 in monthly health care costs, management's unilateral right to subcontract work, the right to replace all full-time workers with part timers, elimination of seniority rights, limits on free speech for workers, and the "elimination of a meaningful grievance procedure."

The day the lockout began, a Blade editorial called this union-busting tactic "a legitimate tool in collective bargaining."

Since the lockout began and an All Fronts Boycott was launched, circulation has dropped 15 percent and 10,000 readers have cancelled their subscriptions.

Two hundred and fifty local businesses have stopped advertising, despite the Blade offering free ad space. Politicians have refused endorsements. This past Labor Day, support was so high Vellequette called it "one great big giant hug."

Meanwhile the eight-month lockout at AK Steel in Middletown continues. On Oct. 18, IAM members rejected in a two-to-one vote what AK bosses called a "clarified proposal." It was basically the same deal turned down Sept. 24. Despite the obvious hardship, workers won't give up pension guarantees or seniority rights and

they don't want to be "retrained" by strikebreakers. Churches and local businesses are doing what they can to assist in this town of 53,000 where everyone knows someone affected by the lockout.

In Cleveland, the low-paid maintenance workers in public housing are making their exploitation a matter of public concern. On Oct. 10, members of AFSCME Local 1355 marched on the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority, demanding a 34 percent raise. Charging racism, these maintenance workers need that much to achieve parity with those doing similar work in Lorain County and elsewhere. "I've got people eating in soup kitchens," stated Local 1355 President David Patterson.

On Oct. 18 workers marched on the home of Mayor Frank Jackson, demanding he intervene. Supporter and community activist Art McKoy was arrested and held overnight.

In Akron and Marysville, Goodyear strikers are also ready for the long battle ahead. There are also smaller strikes, such as one begun Sept. 8 against PolyOne in Avon, where the UAW has been trying since March 2005 to get a first contract. In every corner of the state, labor is telling capital, enough is enough. □

Wal-Mart workers win \$78.5 million lawsuit

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

A Philadelphia jury found Oct. 13 that Wal-Mart, the world's largest retailer and Pennsylvania's largest private employer, knowingly benefited from not paying employees for all the time they worked. The jury awarded \$78.5 million to current and former employees of Wal-Mart Stores Inc.'s Pennsylvania stores. The ruling involves nearly 187,000 workers.

After a five-week trial, the Common Pleas Court jury found that Wal-Mart failed to pay workers for their rest breaks, forcing employees to work off the clock. The jury found that the mega-chain knowingly received an unfair benefit from not paying the employees.

Wal-Mart could be forced to pay more damages in the case.

"I would say Wal-Mart was stealing our time, because we weren't getting our breaks," former employee Delores Killingsworth Barber of North Philadelphia testified to the jury. Another Philadelphia area employee, Michelle Braun, told of being locked inside the store and forced to work without pay after she had clocked out when her shift ended.

Wal-Mart attorney Neal Manne argued that the lead plaintiffs were just a small group of disgruntled employees. However, the fact that at least seven other class-action lawsuits and more than 50 smaller lawsuits are pending against Wal-Mart on wage and hour issues proves otherwise.

In December, California jurors awarded \$172.3 million to a class of 115,919 current and former Wal-Mart and Sam's Club workers who were made to miss meal breaks.

In the Pennsylvania case, jurors found that workers at Wal-Mart were forced to work more than 33 million rest breaks between 1998 and 2001 because company management was under pressure to cut costs. Store managers received bonuses that sometimes doubled their pay if they reached the profit goal.

While clearly a victory for the workers involved, the class-action finding fails to address the ongoing problem that the world's largest retailer continues to make megaprofits off the back of its seriously underpaid work force.

In 2004, Wal-Mart Chief Executive Officer Lee Scott received a salary of \$1.2 million and \$22 million in bonuses, stock awards and stock options. In 2005, Wal-Mart's average sales "associ-

ate" earned \$17,114 a year—that's more than \$10,000 under the poverty level of a two-person family to meet basic needs. In addition, Wal-Mart's health insurance policy only covers 43 percent of its 1.39 million employees. And those covered end up paying a high proportion of their incomes to cover premiums and deductibles.

A 2005 study, "The Effect of Wal-Mart on Local Labor Markets" by David Neumark, also found that the average Wal-Mart store reduces wages per person by 5 percent for all workers in the county in which it operates.

While Wal-Mart clearly profits from underpaying workers at stores in the United States, its biggest profit margin comes from exploiting workers in Wal-Mart factories abroad. Workers from Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Nicaragua and Swaziland brought a class action lawsuit against Wal-Mart in September 2005, asserting that they were often paid less than the legal minimum wage. Some said they were beaten by managers and were locked in their factories.

Wal-Mart workers need more than lawsuits. They need a company-wide union that can fight for workers' rights at home and abroad. □

Justice for Hector Rivas

Workers' health, safety vs. corporate greed

By Casandra Clark Mazariegos
Boston

Hector Rivas, a mechanic for the Boston Public School buses and United Auto Workers (UAW) member, passed away on March 9. He was found unconscious at the Freepoint Street yard of First Student, Inc. after inhaling carbon monoxide while starting the school buses on a cold winter morning.

First Student had been using gasoline-powered jump starters that are located in an enclosed service truck. For over two years UAW local 1569, mechanics union, had urged First Student to ventilate the trucks at a cost of between \$25-40 a vehicle. Management refused!

This is just one example of the many safety violations committed by First Student, Inc. On April 18, another mechanic fell victim to their hazardous behavior. Miguel Camacho, Hector Rivas' son-in-law, was injured on the job when a defective air lift struck him. First Student had illegally modified the air jack with chains instead of spending the additional money on a safer lift. The chains jammed as Camacho attempted to free them.

On Sept. 8, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) cited First Student with 12 charges of serious and willful violations of federal safety regulations. These charges came as a result of an aggressive campaign by the UAW and United Steelworkers 8751 School Bus Drivers local to demand OSHA take

action. Among these charges is a meager \$70,000 fine for willful negligence leading to the death of Hector Rivas.

The money collected from these fines will go into the federal treasury, not to the Rivas family. In cold and callous corporate form, the company has claimed that the tragedies were "the result of worker carelessness" and is contesting every charge.

The implications of these findings are

Labor, community activists form Justice for Hector Rivas Committee

Thousands of workers across the country are killed and maimed at work every day. If First Student were a person that had locked Hector Rivas in an enclosed space exposing him to fatal levels of carbon monoxide, this person would be facing murder charges. Corporations must be held accountable. OSHA's actions are not enough.

A slap-on-the-wrist fine of \$70,000 for the fatal accident of a worker will not stop future tragedies. As long as corporate decision-making continues to be governed by "bottom line" profit motive, businesses will find it more "cost effective" to face possible nuisance fines than to pay to provide a safe environment for workers and communities.

The public good does not even enter into the equation. How ironic when speaking about school children. If these companies are not held accountable by being charged with criminal neglect and sentenced with jail time, they will continue to make deci-

alarming. Boston transports over 32,000 school children daily. The mechanics and bus drivers are operating in dangerous conditions. The community deserves safe and effective public services. The city must be made to provide a safe workplace for employees and a safe ride for children. The city is attempting to deny responsibility in the Rivas tragedy. However it is the city that owns the buses, all of the equipment

sions based on "the bottom line."

Government has allowed this corporate injustice since the beginning of the industrial revolution. Only a movement of workers and their unions united with the communities can fight for real safety.

On Sept. 26, labor and community activists united with the Rivas and Camacho families to form the Committee for Justice for Hector Rivas. The committee includes representatives from the UAW, USW 8751, Painters District 35, the Rosa Parks Human Rights Day Committee, International Action Center, Women's Fightback Network, Voices of Liberation and Boston city councilors Chuck Turner and Felix Arroyo.

The committee, under the leadership of the families, has declared its determination to bring out the truth regarding these tragedies in the face of a racist media white-out. The committee's bilingual meetings have formulated an action plan including calling for an independent inquiry into

and pays the employees. First Student just administers the business.

First Student won the management contract in 2003 by underbidding their competitors by \$13 million. This has resulted in massive cuts that endanger the safe transportation of children and the working conditions of workers. These cuts have resulted in the death of Hector Rivas and the injury of Miguel Camacho.

Hector Rivas' death and organizing broad outreach to labor and the community. The committee is working on multiple levels to help the family move forward from the horrible tragedies they have suffered.

On Oct. 7, Javier Ortiz, Rivas' son, spoke at a rally of over 125 African-American community activists sponsored the Boston Workers Alliance held at Malcolm X Park in Roxbury. He summed up the committee's mission when he appealed for unity of the African-American, Latin@ and working class white communities, stating: "What happened to my father can happen to your fathers, your mothers, your brothers, your sisters. Let's unite to fight for justice for Hector Rivas and fight to prevent any future tragedies."

The writer is co-director of Urban Roots, a dance performance collaborative, and a member of the Committee for Justice for Hector Rivas.

—Casandra Clark Mazariegos



PHOTO: RIVAS FAMILY

Hector Rivas

NEW YORK

Immigrant rights protest unites the issues

By Heather Cottin
New York

"We beat back Sensenbrenner, now for round two of the struggle," said Walter Pacheco from the New York-based Ecuadorian group, Pachamama, as 2,000 rallied for immigrant rights at Union Square on Oct. 21.

Organized by New York United for Immigrant Rights, a coalition of over 60 groups, the protesters called for legalization, family reunification, and an end to raids, deportations and deaths at the border. They rejected all congressional anti-immigrant legislation.

Activists from the South Asian, African American, Caribbean, Latin American, Middle Eastern, and Asian Pacific Islander communities spoke of the relationship of their struggles to economic and social crises in the developing countries and immigration.

In the bright fall sunshine, eight-year-old Joshua James told how he felt when, three years ago, "Daddy was taken to jail in his bathrobe and deported to Jamaica. The government says it is for families," said Josh. "But I miss my daddy and the government took him away."

New York City Councilperson John Liu questioned a government which says it is in favor of family values while conducting an immigration policy which destroys families, leaving children like Josh orphaned by deportation raids.

La Guardia Community College student Álvaro López described how immigration



policy targets youth. City University of New York charges undocumented students twice the tuition of foreign students with papers.

Monique Dols, an organizer of the recent Columbia University protest against Jim Gilchrist, the leader of the xenophobic Minutemen, said: "We were viciously attacked by the Minutemen and their supporters and are now vilified by the corporate media. We didn't create the violence; we exposed the racists' violence."

"We need to protest in schools, universities, with Black and white, Latin@s, Asians, Africans, unifying to oppose racism," said Rádamas Pérez, representing

the Dominican community in Washington Heights, N.Y.

Bobby Khan, a Pakistani activist, said: "Since 9/11, the U.S. government has repressed us, arresting people in their mosques [as terrorists]. Last week there was a mass deportation of 40 men to Pakistan. We are victims of a lie, arrested, held in prisons without charges, and tortured."

Hilda, from Esperanza del Barrio, a group of street vendors in East Harlem, said no one is illegal. "We live in fear of the migra [the Border Patrol]. But we are really the victims of a global economy that forced us here. I ask you: where would the

New York October 21.

WW: LAL ROOHC

U.S. be without the labor of my brothers and sisters?"

"How can there be a concept like 'illegal workers?'" asked DRUM representative Rishi Singh. "Here is what is illegal: 4,000 have died in the desert trying to cross to the U.S.! \$337 billion for an illegal war in Iraq!"

New York City Councilperson Charles Barron said: "This is a city of immigrants, and unless you are an Indigenous person, you are an immigrant to this city. They stole us from Africa to build this nation, making profits for the capitalists that we never shared. This is your story too. Immigrants must unite and support Black issues. We should bring the troops home, and use the money to provide jobs in New York City and across the U.S."

Lamis Deek from Al-Awda spoke passionately about the poverty, unemployment, homelessness and violence Palestinians face. "Just days ago, an Israeli company got a contract to build a 'border security' fence between the U.S. and Mexico. The U.S. took the most fertile land from Mexico, and the Zionist Israelis did the same with the Palestinian land. ... That government is right now planning an attack on Gaza. Like you, we struggle so we can live free."

Protesters carried a "wall" representing those who died at the border wall as they marched towards Times Square, chanting "Sí se puede" (yes, we can). □

Facing execution

Death row prisoner takes his life

By Gloria Rubac
Houston

"I didn't shoot him."

These last words were written on his cell wall by death row prisoner Michael Johnson in his own blood just hours before the state of Texas was going to execute him.

Johnson had always proclaimed his innocence, since being arrested at age 18 for capital murder. But on Sept. 19, after 10 years on death row with his appeals running out, and only 15 hours away from being executed, Johnson slit his throat and killed himself.

His mother, Patricia Johnson, told the Waco Tribune-Herald, "My son killed himself this morning so they couldn't have the satisfaction of seeing him die."

She said he had told his sister, Michelle, during a visit on the previous day that he was thinking about killing himself.

"They tried my son for someone else's deed," Johnson said. "They had a confession but they ignored it."

Months before Johnson went to trial, David Vest, the youth who was with Johnson during a gas station robbery and murder, confessed in front of a judge and the district attorney that he, not Johnson, had committed the murder.

This confession was never given to Johnson's attorneys, as is required by law.

So when Vest changed his story and testified against Johnson, not only did Johnson's own attorneys not know Vest had already confessed to the murder, but neither did Johnson's jury. The jury gave Johnson the death penalty. Vest is now out after serving eight years.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice is investigating Johnson's suicide. The Office of Inspector General, which is the investigative arm of the prison system, is handling the investigation, TDCJ spokeswoman Michelle Lyons said.

"There needs to be an independent

investigation of Michael's suicide, done by those who have a true interest in not only Johnson but in the racist courts that deny the poor any semblance of justice," Njeri Shakur, an activist with the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement, told Workers World.

"Having the prison system investigate is absurd. The questions are not how did he get a razor but why did Michael face an execution if he was innocent. Why do the DAs in his case get off free after violating the law and not turning over exculpatory evidence as is required?"

The Texas prison system apologized to the victim's family, saying they were so sorry that they were not going to be able to witness an execution.

The Texas prison system leads the country in executions with 377—over one-third of the country's 1,047 that have been carried out since they resumed in 1976.

Texas has rescued several prisoners from death just so they could be executed later. Seven suicides have been successfully carried out by men on death row.

Thomas Miller-El, who spent almost 20 years on death row here before the Supreme Court sent his case back, reflected on Johnson's execution from the Dallas County Jail where he is awaiting a new trial.

"Michael was scared to death when he got his last date a couple of years ago. It tore him up. Every time the state sets an execution

date, they kill you — mentally, spiritually, and psychologically. Your body may be the only thing left alive. I know this because

I have had 10 execution dates," he told Workers World. □

Statement from Howard Guidry, Oct. 19

Michael Johnson used to be my next-door neighbor on death row. Many mornings we walked the outside recreation yard together. Though we were divided by a row of bars, I felt a strong connection to Michael because the main subject of most of our conversations was our innocence.

Michael would become very emotional and excited when he talked about his appeals and the opportunity he had to prove he did not commit the crime. He was a very intelligent man and sometimes I could feel his frustration at the slowness of the appeal process. He often confided in me that despite everybody involved in his case knowing he did not commit the crime, he still wasn't sure he would get off death row.

Some days were better than others for Michael. Sometimes we'd walk the yard with few words being spoken. I know on those days Michael's despair was high.

Michael had a strong spiritual foundation. He often shared tracts about Islam with me. A few days prior to me moving to another pod, Michael gave me several Islamic books and flashcards. I say this because I am confident Michael was coherent and I know his final act was made with a sound mind & spiritual conviction.

The appeal courts may not have granted Michael relief.

The State of Texas may have ignored his pleas of innocence.

The executioner may have been priming its poisons and sterilizing its needles to murder another human being.

However, I believe in the end we can take some small consolation in Michael's death because he was victorious. Michael destroyed the state's plan to murder him. He took his own life. He freed himself. His last words, "I DIDN'T DO IT," that were scribbled in blood across one of the cold oppressive walls that held him, resound painfully against those who represent Texas' death penalty system.

May those words be our words, words that we repeat and we chant and we carry with us in our hearts to remember Michael Johnson. These words will remind the world that, yes, George Bush, we DO execute innocent people.

These words will remind us that we must continue the fight to abolish the death penalty because THE SYSTEM IS BROKEN.

Take Michael's courage and spirit with you to Austin on October 28th for the annual march to stop executions and chant for me: Long live Michael Johnson!

Howard Guidry, SPN # 01446317
Harris County Jail, 6-N-1, 701 North San Jacinto, Houston, TX 77002

Howard did 10 years on Texas death row before the federal court told Harris County to release or retry him. Howard's new trial is set for Jan. 29. For information see www.howardguidry.com or contact 713-503-2633 or 713-237-0357 or e-mail Abolition.Movement@hotmail.com

From 1993 to today

Racial solidarity threatens prison officials

By Sharon Danann
Cleveland

Four hundred seven prisoners took over a portion of a prison in Lucasville, Ohio, for 11 days in April 1993. When it was over, one guard and nine prisoners had been killed, making it the longest prison uprising with loss of life in recorded U.S. history.

It seemed that only Ohioans were riveted to the drama as it unfolded. This was partly because the events in Lucasville took place at the same time that 83 Branch Davidians were being incinerated by Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agents in Waco, Texas.

What held the Lucasville rebellion together was unity between Black and white prisoners, as reported by Staughton Lynd in "Lucasville: The Untold Story of a Prison Uprising" and elsewhere.

George Skatzes, at that time a member of the racist Aryan Brotherhood, was approached by a Black prisoner within the first hours of the takeover because he had been known to mediate disputes among prisoners. White and Black prisoners were on opposite sides of the gym and the atmosphere was tense.

Skatzes, who had never been a public speaker, put his arm around the Black man

and said to the assembled inmates: "This is against the administration. We are all in this together. They are against everyone in here who's blue [the color of the prisoners' uniforms]. ... If they come in here, they're going to kill all of us. They're going to kill this man and me, no matter what color we are."

Later, when Skatzes was out in the prison yard as a spokesperson, he announced: "We are oppressed people; we have come together as one. We are brothers. ... We are a unit here, they try to make this a racial issue. It is not a racial issue. Black and white alike have joined hands in SOCF [Southern Ohio Correctional Facility] and become one strong unit."

The Ohio State Highway Patrol officers who entered portions of the prison after the siege told afterward of signs and slogans written on the walls: "Black and White Together," "Black and White Unity," "Convict Unity" and "Convict Race." This forging of unity across racial barriers adds to the reasons why the Ohio system of (in)justice has been so determined to make an example of the Lucasville Five.

The imam of the Sunni Muslims, Sid-dique Abdullah Hasan, negotiated with prison authorities during the siege, as did another member of the Aryan Brotherhood, Jason Robb. Their efforts contributed to a negotiated settlement to the siege. This

settlement included a 21-point agreement that the warden had to sign, after which the remaining five hostages were released and prisoners came out in groups of 20. Their reward for preventing a bloodbath, ironically, is the death penalty.

Skatzes was also convicted and is on death row. Together the five prisoners falsely convicted in connection with the deaths that took place during the uprising are known as the Lucasville Five. The other two of the Five are Black, so the Five reflect the make-up of the prison population in Ohio: roughly 60 percent Black and Latin@ and 40 percent white.

The solidarity among the Lucasville Five has held strong. As reported by Lynd, they share legal materials and are actively concerned for each other's health. They have gone on hunger strikes together to protest the conditions of their confinement.

One of the fasts was accompanied by a list of demands that started with proper medical treatment for George Skatzes. After about another week, only Skatzes and Hasan were still fasting. The prison approached both individually to state that the concerns would be addressed.

But neither of them would eat until told directly by the other that he was ready to eat again. Hasan said: "I chose to stay on the fast to let them know that I was down

with George's struggle, too, and I would not sit quiet and let the system mess over him. ... [T]hey got the message and know that we are one."

The Lucasville Five's convictions are based entirely on perjured testimony extracted from other prisoners under threat that they would be sent up on capital charges if they didn't sculpt the facts to the prosecution's liking. A growing number of supporters are calling for their convictions to be overturned and them to be set free.

Messages of solidarity, along with stamps and envelopes to facilitate responses, can be sent to S.A. Hasan (#R130-559), Keith Lamar (#317-117), Jason Robb (#308-919), James Were (#173-245) at the Ohio State Penitentiary, 878 Coitsville-Hubbard Rd., Youngstown, OH 44505-4635 and to George Skatzes (#173-501), P.O. Box 788, Mansfield, OH 44901-0788.

Hasan is the co-sponsor of a Web site, prisonersolidarity.org and also has a Web site at www.ohiodeathrow.com/carlos_sanders.htm. Keith Lamar has written a book, "Condemned," which can be obtained from his address above. Much of the material for this article is derived from Staughton Lynd's "Lucasville: The Untold Story of a Prison Uprising." For more information, go to www.workers.org/2006/us/lucasville-five-1026/

The frame-up of Ricardo Palmera

By Berta Joubert-Ceci
Washington, D.C.

Ricardo Palmera, a peace negotiator from the FARC-EP (Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces-Popular Army), is currently being tried in the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., where he was extradited from his homeland on Dec. 31, 2004, on charges of kidnapping, terrorism and drug trafficking.

This is an important and crucial trial. It is the first of this nature, with an insurgent from another country being tried in criminal court in the United States. Although widely covered by Colombian and other international media, news of the case has been notoriously absent from the commercial media in this country, giving the impression that there is a media white-out.

The trial on drug trafficking will be a separate case that will be heard after the conclusion of the current case of kidnapping and terrorism.

The charges of kidnapping against Palmera—better known by his Simón Bolívar-inspired pseudonym “Simón Trinidad”—stem from a February 2003 incident in which a small plane flown by U.S. contractors/agents fell over territory controlled by the insurgents in Caquetá, in the south of Colombia. These contractors were among the many U.S. military or military-associated personnel sent by the United States to Colombia to fight against the insurgency under Plan Colombia. The agents—Thomas Howes, Keith Stansell and Marc Gonsalves—have since been kept captive by the FARC.

Trinidad was extradited to the United States after Colombian President Álvaro Uribe issued an ultimatum to the FARC. With no possibility of negotiation, he unilaterally demanded that the insurgents

release all captives by Dec. 30, 2004 as the only condition for annulment of the extradition order.

Trinidad is not charged with direct involvement in the kidnapping. Rather, the crime for which he is being tried under the new U.S. antiterrorism legal framework is “association.” He is charged with “conspiracy” to commit the crime of hostage taking. The Colombian government accuses Trinidad of trying to force a prisoner exchange using the three captive U.S. agents.

The fact is, however, that Trinidad had gone to Ecuador at the request of the FARC to contact James Lemoyne, a United Nations representative with whom Trinidad had spoken before, about possible peace negotiations with the Colombian government. This fact has been twisted into the accusation that Trinidad was pressuring the Colombian government to exchange the approximately 500 FARC prisoners in Colombian jails in return for the 60 or so captives of the FARC, including the three U.S. agents.

The meeting never took place since the combined action of the Interpol, CIA and the Colombian and Ecuadorian armed forces captured—or rather, kidnapped—Trinidad in Quito, Ecuador, on Jan. 2, 2004. He was then extradited to Colombia, where he remained in maximum security prison until Dec. 31, 2004 when he was extradited to the U.S.

In Colombia he faced 100 charges of terrorism, kidnapping, drug trafficking and rebellion that guaranteed 81 months in prison, according to his lawyer in Colombia, Oscar Silva. In fact Trinidad is being tried on these charges right now in Colombia even though he is not present, forbidden to be there by Thomas Horgan, the U.S. federal judge presiding over his case here.



Ricardo Palmera

The charge of terrorism is based on U.S. President Bill Clinton having designated the insurgent FARC as a “terrorist” organization in 1997. Therefore, Trinidad is now charged with aiding and giving material support to a “terrorist” group.

The trial

The opening date of the trial in Washington had to be postponed from Oct. 10 to Oct. 16 because the jury had not been selected on time. The jury of 12 regulars and three alternates is made up of eight women and seven men selected from a pool of 50.

Who is the judge? Chief Judge Thomas Hogan was an appointee of President Ronald Reagan. Hogan has ruled on behalf of the FBI in several occasions. According to the Wikipedia, he “ordered Judith Miller of the New York Times jailed after she refused to disclose her confidential source to a grand jury” and in May he “signed the search warrant authorizing the FBI to search the Capitol building offices of [African-American] U.S. Congressman William Jefferson, the only such search in United States history.” He also ruled in July “that an FBI raid on [the] Louisiana congressman’s Capitol Hill office was legal.”

According to the Web site [www.vetsfor-](http://www.vetsfor-justice.com)

www.vetsfor-justice.com, “He joined the ongoing conspiracy to hide the truth in Case 84-0399, a lawsuit filed by a 100% Service-Connected Disabled Combat Veteran against the Veterans Administration.”

His long instructions to the jury in the Trinidad case were very complicated and difficult to understand. This is a very difficult case as it is, with the jury having to understand Latin America, Colombia—jurors had to be shown a map so they could place that country—insurgency, U.S. foreign relations, and so on. The jury can take notes but must leave the notebook in the court before leaving. They will not have access to transcripts. The judge was very emphatic when he told the jury, “You have to rely entirely on the notes you take and what you hear.”

There had been rumors before the beginning of the trial trying to scare the public away, saying that the FARC would attempt to kill witnesses.

Trinidad is being held incommunicado. He has not even been allowed to choose his own lawyer. He cannot attend his trial in Colombia nor communicate with his relatives there.

He appeared very pale the first day in court. He was however dressed in a dark blue suit, without shackles. The last time he was in court he had been dressed in prison uniform, shackled and with no access to interpreters. This time there were three interpreters and Trinidad movingly thanked them with a big smile at the end of the hearing.

If convicted he could face the death penalty. However, because of the extradition agreement between Colombia and the United States, he could face a maximum penalty of 30 years since the death penalty does not exist in Colombia.

Go to www.workers.org to read more about this case.

Pacifica-WBAI election to determine political path

By John Catalinotto
New York

While most eyes are focused on the national midterm elections, a local election to the board of New York’s premier progressive radio station may have a greater impact on New York’s political activity than most of the region’s Senate and House races.

WBAI, the local Pacifica station, has mailed out ballots for an election that will end Nov. 15 to seat nine listener delegates to three-year terms on the 24-member Local Station Board. The outcome of the election will help determine whether WBAI takes a direction of active anti-racism and anti-war broadcasting, or retreats. Three staff delegates are chosen separately.

WBAI broadcasts both political discussion and cultural shows representing a broad spectrum of New York ethnic and other communities, especially those most oppressed. The station is the only broadcast medium that provides an opening for anti-imperialist analyses of important world events on a regular basis.

The station reaches out 50 miles from Manhattan. Its broadcast range potentially reaches 20 million people. It also reaches almost the entire progressive community of political activists, including 1960s leftists and immigrant taxi drivers who always have their radio dials on 99.5 FM. The station is thus vital to publicizing meetings and protests.

Since the station is estimated to be

worth hundreds of millions of dollars on the private market, wealthy entrepreneurs in radio see it as a beckoning pot of gold.

At the end of the year 2000, a business-oriented group seized WBAI in a virtual coup, displacing most of the progressive shows and moving WBAI toward sale for privatization. Once this was reversed by listener and legal action, the struggle over the station’s future moved to the listener boards and the elections.

In this year’s election, as in the 2004 balloting, two groupings have each gathered 10 to 11 of the 24 candidates campaigning for the nine listener seats. Each group again has a similar political thrust. Reading the listener candidate statements in the brochure WBAI mailed out to its members, it’s easy to judge each slate’s political direction.

Justice and Unity

In the candidates’ promotional literature, those from the Justice and Unity slate emphasize their commitment to political activism and to representing the diverse working-class communities in the New York region, especially communities of color. The other, the Alliance for Community Elections, essentially the group formerly known as “List-Prog,” emphasizes its members’ business, administrative and fund-raising experience.

Ray Laforest, an incumbent board member, is a labor and Haitian community organizer and a member of Pacifica’s national board. He is running on the

Justice and Unity slate. Laforest told Workers World that “the core members of our slate represent a progressive vision and have extensive contacts with communities in the city that are struggling against political reaction.

“These are dangerous times,” Laforest continued. “We are living under a government whose priority is to oppose any gains made by working people and communities of color in the past 30 years. This makes Pacifica and WBAI more relevant than ever. It is WBAI’s role to educate people about their political surroundings, to discuss strategies for survival and for the struggle of working people, and to be a contact point between the different struggles.”

Imani Henry, an organizer for the International Action Center and program coordinator for TransJustice, is running for the first time. Henry said his fellow Justice and Unity candidates are all “bona fide activists. Through their connections in the various communities, including the lesbian/gay/bi/trans struggles and all the anti-racist struggles, they will build listenership and membership in the station.”

While the ACE people claim their business and promotional experience is needed for fundraising, Laforest points out that there are different paths to financial stability. “It is more important to expand the involvement of listeners in the station. Some of the ACE people have obstructed this effort. But doing outreach and bringing in new people also puts the station on

a sound financial basis.”

How to vote

All of the approximately 18,000 WBAI members are eligible to vote. Due to a complicated voting process aimed at guaranteeing proportional representation and some representation for minority opinions, the order in which members make their selections makes a difference.

The Justice and Unity slate asks members to vote for the slate’s “multiracial, anti-racist, majority-women election slate of listeners,” listed below with a small part of their activities, and to mark their ballots in the following order: (1) Father Lawrence Lucas, Black liberation theologian; (2) Nia Bediako, chair, Local Board Programming Committee; (3) Berta Silva, labor organizer with 1199/SEIU; (4) Ray Laforest; (5) Marianela Tricoche, Bolivarian Circle.

Also, (6) Bernadette Ellorin, regional coordinator, BAYAN USA—progressive Filipino alliance; (7) Samia Halaby, member of Al-Awda, the Palestine Right of Return Coalition; (8) Sam Spady, president, NAACP/New Rochelle branch; (9) Imani Henry (10) Tibby Brooks, organizer, New York Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition.

The Justice and Unity release also suggests not marking the ballot for any other candidates.

For more information on the Justice and Unity slate and its program, see www.justiceunity.org, and for the descriptions of all the candidates and an explanation of voting details, see www.wbai.org/elections. □

Iraq's health crisis, brain drain

By Robert Dobrow

Last week, Workers World and most of the world's press reported on a study in the highly respected medical journal *The Lancet*, arguing that hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, estimated at about 655,000, have died as a result of the U.S. invasion and occupation.

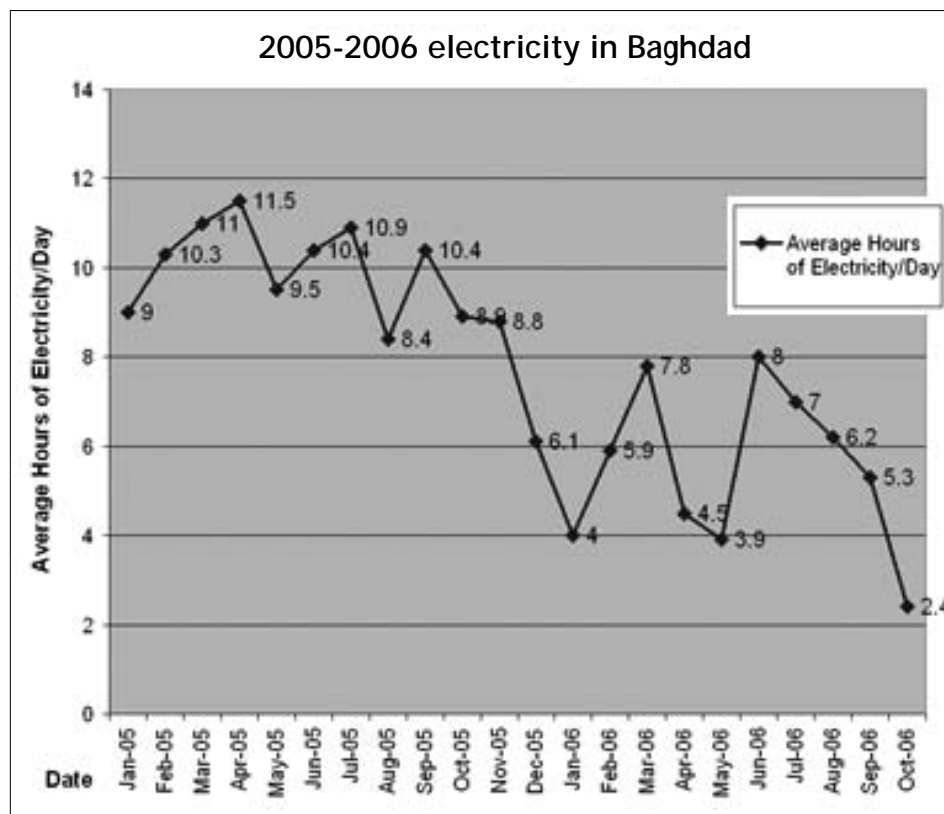
Iraqi doctors now charge that as many as half of these deaths might have been avoided "if proper medical care had been provided to the victims." Writing in the *British Medical Journal* this month, a group of Iraqi medical professionals appeal for international support in the face of staggering problems. "Many emergency departments," they state, "are no more than halls with beds, fluid suckers, and oxygen bottles. . . . Our experience has taught us that poor emergency medical services are more disastrous than the disaster itself."

Of the 34,000 physicians in Iraq before 2003, some 12,000 have left the country and 2,000 have been killed, according to the conservative Brookings Institution's just-released Iraq Index. The global health group Medact puts the number who have left closer to 18,000. Medact says that the most basic treatments are lacking. "Approximately 50 percent of Iraqi children suffer from some form of malnourishment," their report says. "Easily treatable conditions such as diarrhea and respiratory illness caused 70 percent of all child deaths."

On top of this medical emergency sits a water, sanitation and electricity crisis. The U.S.'s own Special Inspector General for Iraqi Reconstruction [sic!] in a recent audit states that only 32 percent of Iraqis have access to potable water and a mere 19 percent have "sewerage access."

Electricity levels in Baghdad are at the lowest levels since 2003. Electricity is only turned on about 2.4 hours per day, compared to an average of 16-24 hours per day before the invasion, according to the Brookings study cited above.

Baghdad is home to almost six million people. The temperature there this week is in the 90s (Fahrenheit)—with virtually



no electricity for refrigeration, fans, lights, or power.

"Imagine yourself trying to operate on a patient in a two-hour surgery and the power goes out. . . . You pray to God, and you sweat," Dr. Waleed George of Baghdad told Medact.

Record numbers of teachers and intellectuals are also fleeing the country in the face of systematic violence. The Iraqi university system, once considered among the best in the Arab world, has been ravaged. Isam Kadhemi al-Rawi, president of the Association of University Teachers, estimates that 2,000 professors have left Iraq since the invasion, on top of the 10,000 who left in the 12 years since the first Gulf war. Iraqis report that academics who have been killed are often victims of professional assassinations, not the car bombs or sectarian killings that get the focus of media attention.

"We don't know who is threatening us," said Rawi, "but we do know that when we report killings and kidnappings those responsible are never found." These state-

ments were given to the *Christian Science Monitor* over two years ago. And the violence has gotten much worse. The *Monitor* reported that a "widely accepted theory" of who is behind the killings "is that the U.S. and Israel are encouraging Iraq's instability and brain drain because, as Rawi says, 'they want a weak Iraq.'"

The *British Independent's* veteran Middle East correspondent Robert Fisk has written, "University staff suspect there is a campaign to strip Iraq of its academics

to complete the destruction of Iraq's cultural heritage, which began when America entered Baghdad."

The BRussell's Tribunal in Belgium, the Spanish Campaign against Occupation and for the Sovereignty of Iraq, the International Action Center in the U.S. and many others have joined forces to demand an investigation into and to stop the assassination of Iraqi academics and medical personnel (www.brusselstribunal.org).

Lest anyone think this is just "conspiracy-mongering," recall the then-secret, but now well-documented Operation Phoenix program the U.S. organized in Vietnam in the 1960s. The Phoenix program was a CIA-led campaign of assassination and terror. Among those targeted were Vietnamese intellectuals who sympathized with the resistance.

Forty years later, the following exchange with Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence Lt. General William Boykin lies buried at the end of a *New York Times* (Feb. 4, 2005) report on Iraq:

"Boykin was asked whether the government should re-establish a program of identifying and assassinating specific adversaries, like Operation Phoenix, conducted in Vietnam by the CIA. Emphasizing that he was giving his personal opinion, General Boykin said that America's conventional military forces and its Special Operations teams in Iraq and Afghanistan were 'doing a pretty good job of that right now. . . . I think we're doing what the Phoenix program was designed to do, without all of the secrecy.'" □

Iraq disaster

Continued from page 1

expressed fears that a small nuclear weapon had gone off.

The Pentagon claims that all U.S. troops were evacuated from the base, which was meant to hold 5,000, and that there were no casualties. However, a report from Baghdad in the Oct. 15 Sunday Herald of London contradicted that, saying, "Immediate military feedback pointed to

casualties."

In Ramadi and other cities in the center and west of Iraq, resistance fighters patrol the streets without interference from U.S. or puppet troops. Even in the southern city of Amara, the Mahdi Army seized the city for six hours and fought with government troops. Because Mahdi Army leader Moqtada Al-Sadr joined the puppet government, the main Iraqi resistance groups consider him a collaborationist, but the U.S. still clashes with him.

The resistance's military successes have built confidence among its political leadership, according to recent interviews with those close to the resistance or to the Baath Party. This is the other side of the gloomy picture painted by U.S. officials.

Washington reporter Robert Dreyfuss (robertdreyfuss.com) recently interviewed Salah Mukhtar, a former Iraqi official and diplomat who worked in the Information Ministry, served at the United Nations and was Iraq's ambassador to India and to Vietnam before the U.S. invasion. Mukhtar reflects this change:

"The armed resistance has finished all the preparations to control power in Iraq. . . . The resistance is controlling Baghdad now. Yesterday, I spoke to many people, and they said that the attack on the American base [Camp Falcon] was part of a new strategy to inflict heavy casualties on American troops in Iraq."

Answering a question about the comparisons being made to the 1968 Tet Offensive in Vietnam, Mukhtar said, "The strategy of the resistance is based on collecting points, as in boxing. . . . So you exhaust the enemy, by attacking from time to time, until he collapses. The victory of the resistance in Iraq will not be achieved by one battle.

"We expect the first month of next year will be decisive. The Americans are exhausted, and the resistance is preparing simultaneous attacks on American forces everywhere."

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Pakistani Freedom Forum meeting on Lebanon

By Heather Cottin
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Brooklyn is home to thousands of working-class Pakistani immigrants. The Pakistani Freedom Forum has been in support of this community that has been a major target of Department of Homeland Security raids since 9/11.

The PFF was formed in an effort to create unity and resistance among the people who have faced hundreds of disappearances and deportations. The PFF has sought to link their organization to the progressive movement in the U.S.

PFF has a dual role: to defend its members in the United States and to expose the ties of the Musharef regime in Pakistan to the U.S. government.

When the May 1 Coalition organized massive protests in support of the rights of immigrants last spring in New York, Comrade Shahid, a leading organizer from the PFF, joined the coalition and became one of its most active members. He helped to organize hundreds of Pakistanis from Brooklyn and New Jersey on May Day in support of all immigrant workers, especially those who are undocumented.

This past September, at the U.N. Church

Center, the IAC, Al Awda, and a number of other groups including PFF held a large meeting to denounce the Israeli-United States attack on Lebanon in August.

The PFF organized a dinner/meeting called "Lessons of Lebanon" Oct. 18. The main speakers were Samia Halaby, a Palestinian leader of Al-Awda Right to Return Coalition and Sara Flounders, co-director of the International Action Center, who recently returned from a fact-finding mission in Lebanon.

The Lessons of Lebanon meeting focused on resistance. Samia Halaby said that Hezbollah's efforts in repelling and neutralizing the Israeli attack were an example of why an occupied people will always resist. She said resistance is "human and essential." She called the actions of Hezbollah "revolutionary." She noted how they were a unifying force, respectful of peoples' differences, stating, "They are part of the soul of the Lebanese people, connecting to the human drive to be free."

Sara Flounders described Hezbollah's rebuilding of homes, hospitals, and schools and how she met the people who were in the process of cleaning up the devastation wreaked by Israeli planes and army supplied by the Pentagon. She called

Hezbollah a "social organization," and described its efforts to organize both resistance and reconstruction as "an example of unity for us here."

Another speaker, Lynne Stewart, arrived a bit late, to the surprise and joy of the organizers. As everyone stood and cheered, with her spouse, Ralph Poynter, at her side, she announced, "You said if I were free on Wednesday night I should drop by, and I am free tonight!" Just two days before the meeting, Stewart was sentenced to 28 months in prison instead of the 30 years the U.S. government was hoping she would receive under the repressive Patriot Act. She will remain free during the appeals process.

She spoke of her life as a criminal lawyer, a life devoted to people who had no one else to defend them. She described the reasons why she tried to help Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman, to keep his spirit alive, as she was his only human contact.

The meeting ended with a powerful poem in the Indigenous language, Urdu, by Mohammed Shafique, president of the PFF, describing the anguish of a Lebanese mother whose one-and-a-half-year-old son was killed during the recent Israeli assault. □

Solidarity with the DPRK, no sanctions

The following are excerpts from two statements in solidarity with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea following that country's first nuclear test Oct. 9. The first is from the Socialist Party of India (SUCI), which also organized an Oct. 17 demonstration in Kolkata. The second is a statement from Jose Maria Sison, as chairperson of the International Coordinating Committee of the International League of Peoples' Struggle (ILPS) in the Philippines.

Socialist Party of India

The SUCI statement is in the form of a memorandum to U.S. President George W. Bush:

While extending full support to the nuclear test conducted on Oct. 9 by North Korea, which gave due prior indication and ensured no radioactive fall-out, we, on behalf of the democratic-minded peace-loving people of India, would like to emphasize that the socialist government there had no other option but to carry out this test in order to confront the sustained as well as escalated threat of your government and its allies to subvert the socialist system in that country, either by engineering counter-revolution from within or mounting external aggression in the form of armed intervention and creating an economic blockade.

It is the U.S. government that persistently refused to sign a non-aggression pact with North Korea and thereby guar-

anteed her sovereignty and territorial integrity, and instead encircled her with a naval armada of guided missiles, destroyers, bombers and fighter squadrons, nuclear weapons and 30,000 troops stationed in South Korea, that is solely and squarely responsible for pushing North Korea to resort to this otherwise avoidable course of action in self-defense.

We severely condemn the most atrocious economic and military sanctions imposed on socialist North Korea by the UN clearly at the instigation and insistence of the U.S. This once again showed that the UN has virtually become a rubber stamp of the U.S. regime which is found to pursue international gangsterism with alacrity, trampling underfoot all international laws, norms and practices and flaunting brute military might as if it were licensed to arrogate to itself the right to commit foul play with any country that refuses to kneel down before its dictatorial fiat and be pliant with its brigandage and hegemonistic design. ...

We want you to immediately desist from plotting conspiracies against North Korea, revoke all sanctions on her, remove the military encirclement around, diffuse all war tensions being precipitated by you centering around the issue, honor her inalienable right to freedom, sovereignty and preservation of socialist system, and respond to her call for settling all differences through peaceful meaningful rational bilateral talks.

From Jose Maria Sison

"The Korean people and the DPRK have the right to defend their national independence."

The Korean people and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have all the right to defend their national sovereignty and independence, to develop the means to protect themselves, to pursue economic development and seek the peaceful reunification of Korea against the hostile policy of U.S. imperialism and its rabid followers.

It should never be forgotten that Japan colonized the Korean people. Then the U.S. subjected them to massacres in the aftermath of World War II and during the full-scale U.S. war of aggression in 1950-53. It exacted the death toll of more than 4 million Koreans in its failed attempt to control the entirety of the Korean peninsula.

While keeping Korea divided into North and South along the 38th parallel, the U.S. chiefly has used all kinds of methods to contain and subvert the DPRK. These include military encirclement, economic blockade, climate manipulation, espionage and intrusive surveillance, plans and threats of nuclear bombing and countless provocative acts.

The Korean people and the DPRK have therefore a great cause for rejoicing over

the successful testing of its nuclear weapon capabilities. They regard these as means of self-defense against the relentless threats of the U.S. and its cohorts in the Asia-Pacific region. In this regard, the people of the world congratulate the Korean people for the upgrading of their defensive capabilities.

More than ever the U.S. and its cohorts cannot trifle with and bully the Korean people and the DPRK because these are now armed with nuclear weapons. The U.S. and the UK were able to pummel Iraq with bombs for more than 12 years and to launch a fullscale war of aggression in 2003 because they knew that Iraq had no nuclear weapons even as they drummed up the lie that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and had links with al Qaeda. ...

We hope that the now given the fact of DPRK's possession of nuclear weapons will help to reinforce the national sovereignty and independence of the Korean people and the DPRK, to weaken U.S. hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region, to counter the U.S. primacy in nuclear weapons, to strengthen the anti-imperialist movement of the people, to advance the movement for the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons and to attain a just and lasting peace in the world. □

World condemns

Czech Republic's ban on Communist Youth Union

By David Hoskins

The Czech Republic outlawed the Communist Youth Union (KSM) earlier this month after an announcement by the Ministry of Interior ordered the group to disband. The KSM has close ties to the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia which controls 13 percent of the seats in parliament.

The official reason given for KSM's ban was its program for the replacement of the private ownership of the means of production with collective ownership. The government was also unhappy with KSM's advocacy of socialist revolution and used this as a pretext to attack its status as a civic organization.

The Interior Ministry's decision to ban the KSM came a month after the far-right Civic Democrats (ODS) took power after winning a slim plurality of seats in June's parliamentary elections. The ODS is led by Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek, who has been implicated by the Czech media in several business scandals. The ODS failed to win a vote of confidence taken in the lower house of parliament at the beginning of October.

An international campaign brought together hundreds of youth and student organizations, trade unions and political parties to defend the KSM and protest the Ministry of Interior move at Czech embassies around the world.

A defiant KSM has vowed to carry forward the struggle "for the rights of the majority of young people—students, young workers and unemployed—and

for socialism" despite the government ban. The KSM has grown in popularity in recent months by leading a major campaign against a U.S. proposal to build a strategic missile base in their country. The ruling ODS supports this proposal.

The KSM can trace its roots to the former Communist Party in Czechoslovakia, which held power before the bourgeois counterrevolution of 1989 dismantled the country's socialist system. The subsequent introduction of a market economy has brought on a constant attack against workers, young and old, who have seen their standard of living threatened as homelessness and poverty—societal ills eliminated under the socialist system—have re-emerged.

Fight Imperialism Stand Together (FIST) stands in solidarity with the KSM and its struggle to liberate young workers and students and to defend itself against the attacks of the Czech government. FIST denounces the actions of the Interior Ministry as an attack on workers, young people, and students.

FIST is a group of multinational students and young workers living in the United States who fight for socialism in that country and around the world. The writer is a FIST organizer. Contact FIST@workers.org.



U.S. gov't targets travel to Cuba

By Larry Hales

U.S. Attorney R. Alexander Acosta of South Florida announced on Oct. 10 the creation of a task force of federal agencies that will target violators of the U.S. blockade on Cuba, including travelers.

According to Acosta, "The purpose of these sanctions is to isolate the Castro regime economically and to deprive the Castro regime of the U.S. dollars it so desperately seeks."

This is the latest step by the Bush administration to try and punish not only supporters of the Cuban Revolution that travel, but also those that desire to travel to Cuba as tourists. The newest provocation is merely one in a long line that include: a direct invasion of the island in 1961, support for terrorist attacks on the island, many attempts on the life of the beloved revolutionary Fidel Castro, a racist genocidal blockade that has been in effect for over forty years, and travel restrictions against U.S. citizens traveling to the country. U.S. imperialism has always sought the demise of the Cuban revolution, which is strong despite the efforts of the colossus 90 miles to its north.

The last two U.S. administrations have stepped up the U.S. ruling class assault on the revolutionary socialist country. The Cuban Five still languish in U.S. prisons on trumped up charges. The Bush administration in 2004 tightened travel restrictions even for Cuban Americans that want to visit family members—they can now only visit once every three years. And in 2004, a 500-page document was written by the State Department, under Colin Powell, outlining U.S. future policy to further undermine the Cuban Revolution.

Remittances have been severely restrained as well, with the U.S. deeming that only immediate relatives, mothers, fathers and children can receive money from relatives in the U.S., and curbing how much can be sent.

Recently, when President Fidel Castro became ill and required surgery, and so was obligated to relinquish his duties to Raul Castro, the Bush administration provoked the people of Cuba by issuing dangerous remarks.

The newly created task force will include the FBI, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Treasury Department and other agencies. Acosta says the task force is being established "with the aim of hastening the transition to democracy in Cuba." Punishments can range from heavy fines to up to 10 years in prison.

There are many individuals that travel to Cuba, and getting licenses is increasingly more difficult.

Workers and the oppressed must see the blockade and attacks against Cuba revolution for what they are—U.S. imperialism's attempt to destroy a great beacon of what's possible for human societies.

Despite all the harsh measures and attacks, the Cuban revolution has survived and is now being strengthened. This scares the U.S. ruling class.

Cuba has a long history of support for national liberation movements, socialist countries, and anti-imperialist governments, most recently Venezuela, and its example is only 90 miles away from the southernmost tip of Florida.

It is an example of true democracy. When the U.S. talks about democracy, workers in the U.S. need only look at Iraq, or at New Orleans before and after Hurricane Katrina, for examples of U.S.-style democracy—for the rich owners and rulers of capitalist society.

Democracy in Cuba is democracy of the producers, the workers, where there is social security from cradle to the grave, free schooling from preschool through university, universal health care, housing for all, and virtually no unemployment. This is true democracy and this is what the U.S. capitalist class fears. □



Health care, not war!

A commentary in the Oct. 24 New York Times said something the anti-war movement has been saying since the war began three-and-a-half years ago: that the money used on the war should be used for social services instead.

Nicholas D. Kristof reported that new estimates put the war's overall cost at somewhere between \$1 trillion and \$2 trillion. He cites the hidden costs of disability payments, re-enlistment bonuses and the replacement of military equipment—"since the Pentagon says they are being worn out at up to six times the peacetime rate."

He says that the \$2 trillion amount is four times the additional cost needed to provide health insurance for uninsured people in the U.S. for the next 10 years.

This in a period when health care in the United States is more and more a luxury of the rich, when health care is the main sticking issue in most union negotiations with the bosses, when non-union jobs with health care are becoming rarer and rarer.

The National Priorities Project provides even more figures on the war's cost to communities. The Web site reports that the money that has already been spent to occupy Iraq could have hired 5 million additional public-school teachers. It could have built 3 million additional housing units. It could have provided 16 million four-year college scholarships. (www.costofwar.com)

Meanwhile, in Iraq United Press International reported Oct. 21 that

the country's health care system is now in shambles, and that half the current deaths from disease and violence could have been prevented with adequate care. Before the two Gulf wars and 12 years of sanctions, health care in Iraq was free and of high quality.

With these figures in mind, and with the November elections around the corner, it is extremely timely that the Troops Out Now Coalition has issued a call for anti-imperialist unity and action on the fourth anniversary of the war, March 17, 2007.

The call reads in part: "The two interrelated processes that will end this criminal war and occupation are its defeat by the resistance of the Iraqi people on the one hand, and on the other the mass struggle of the people right here in the streets of this country. ... At this juncture, our challenge as an anti-war movement has never been clearer."

The call stresses the connection among all imperialist wars—from those against the people of Asia and the Middle East, to those against workers and the oppressed at home. "Our challenge from here on is to help facilitate something that is as necessary as it is natural—the merging of the struggle against the wars at home with the wars abroad. ... We must find the tactics that bring more workers, both organized and unorganized, into the center of the struggle against the war, bearing in mind that ordinary workers may understand more about imperialism than some full-time activists do." To read and endorse the call go to www.troopsoutnow.org. □

Poverty & struggle in Ivory Coast

By G. Dunkel

On Oct. 20, cocoa farmers in the Ivory Coast suspended the strike they began Oct. 16. The minister of agriculture has agreed to talk with them and they hope that the president of the Ivory Coast, Laurent Gbagbo, who is a cocoa producer, will enter into the talks.

The farmers are demanding a 50 percent increase in the price they get paid at the field edge and a large payment to their cooperatives. The Ivory Coast is the world's largest producer of cocoa, an essential ingredient in the production of chocolate. The capitalist market worldwide has controls on the production of cocoa resulting in growing poverty for these farmers.

Their strike was massive—organizers claimed that over 15,000 farmers took part in it—and they were able to physically block all shipments of cocoa to the ports.

While the farmers have suspended their strike until Oct. 24, the Autonomous Union of the Sons and Daughters of Cocoa & Coffee Producers decided to blockade schools in cocoa areas Oct. 23, which is the day schools begin the new semester in the Ivory Coast. These youth can't go to school because their families don't make enough money to pay the fees.

Earlier in October, bank and financial workers held a three-day strike to demand more pay.

In 1999, 28 percent of Ivoirians lived below the poverty level and now the figure is 44 percent, according to U.N. statistics, and is increasing. The Ivory Coast ranks 163 out of the 177 countries in the U.N.'s human development index. More and more Ivoirians are having trouble finding enough food.

This extreme poverty, in a country which was one of the best-off countries in West Africa in the 1970s and 1980s, has forced many people to live near or on garbage dumps in Abidjan, the capital and major city, because they are forced to survive by picking through trash for salable items.

When an Ivoirian company dumped 5,000 tons of toxic chemicals from Western Europe

in the landfills and sewerage system of Abidjan at the end of August, their effects were massive and deadly. According to a recent report by the minister of Health and Public Hygiene, 10 people died, 69 were hospitalized and over 102,000 people got a checkup because of the fumes from the chemicals.

The reaction of the poorest workers of Abidjan was widespread, militant and strenuous in the form of diverse demonstrations and protests. A government minister was physically attacked on an inspection tour of the contaminated area. The government had to be reshuffled, resulting in a French firm specializing in removing toxic waste being hired by the middle of September.

According to Safiatou Ba N'Daw, head of the government office concerned with removing toxic waste, the French firm has removed over 4,000 tons of waste and the Ivorian government has spent nearly \$1 million on medicines to relieve the effects of the fumes.

A major cause of the increasing misery of the Ivory Coast is French control of its economy and politics. France began colonizing the Ivory Coast in the 1840s. After the Ivory Coast's formal independence in 1960, there were considerably more French citizens living and earning a living in the country than before independence—50,000 compared to 10,000.

In 2002, after a failed coup attempt, a rebellion broke out in the north and France, with U.S. support, got a resolution passed in the United Nations permitting it to send "peacekeepers" to the Ivory Coast, under the oversight of the African Union. Most of the French citizens left in 2002. This development, along with the country being split in half and the suffering of its internal trade from severe disruption, were major blows to the already fragile economy.

The French had hoped to dislodge Laurent Gbagbo, who remains the president. Their mandate is up at the end of October, which is why all this political maneuvering in international venues has broken out. But the Ivoirian people are not asking for foreign intervention. They are struggling for their demands today.

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Indigenous grievances aired at hearing

By Joan Marquardt
and Stephanie Hedgecock
San Francisco

On Oct. 12, more than 100 people packed a room in San Francisco's City Hall to participate in a four-hour Native American Hearing, sponsored by the Human Rights Commission of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. That the meeting was being held on the "Columbus Day" holiday that celebrates European invasion and genocide in the Americas was not lost on anyone in the room.

The hearing was organized by Marcus Arana (Pikuni), a discrimination investigator for the commission, and a founder of the city's LGBT community center. Arana told WW: "[This] is the first public hearing in San Francisco to hear all the issues facing Native Americans. It is an honor to be able to give back to the community, especially to bring voice to the original local people, the Ohlone, who are not recognized by the federal government, who have no recognized homeland."

When asked by WW what the city might do in response to the testimony taken, Arana gave several examples of what he expects: "The schools lack a culturally competent curriculum. They lack Native teachers despite a huge Native community. It is fair to say many other communities receive financial support for community centers from the city, such as the LGBT center."

Local Indigenous people planned for months just what needed to go on record that night. Their remarks, whether prepared or off-the-cuff, were eloquent and powerful. Most speakers were Native, but non-Native supporters also voiced their support of the struggles and aspirations of Indigenous peoples.

Francisco Da Costa set the tone when he opened, saying, "This land belongs to the First People of this area, known as the Muwekma Ohlone." He said that the ancient funerary places, like the hundreds of shellmounds in the area, are those of the First People and that everyone should act out of "respect for Mother Earth, the shellmounds and most of all for the spirits of ancestors." The shellmounds are sacred Indigenous burial grounds in Northern California that were desecrated by European settlers.

Corrina Gould (Carquin tribe of the Muwekma Ohlone), an organizer of the Shellmound Walk, thanked the ancestors and said the shellmounds represent the heritage of their children: "[The] cemeteries without headstones that are under Macy's, where we've stood and prayed, are for the children. ... This is where your ancestors are."

Perry Matlock, long-time shellmound activist, contrasted the respect with which European sacred stone circles such as Stonehenge are treated with the disgraceful hate crimes committed by Europeans on sacred Native American lands. He said the actions are "cultural genocide, acts of terrorism and ethnic cleansing" and called for the "preservation of all [Indigenous] cultural and grave sites."

Mona Stone Fish (Mohawk) decried the disgrace of thousands of homeless people living on the streets of San Francisco and the misconception that "they choose to be that way," saying, "Who starts out with that aspiration?" She chided the city on the fact that so many Native people are homeless.

Espanola Jackson, an African-American elder and liaison for the Muwekma Ohlone, added that this hearing wasn't the first time the Muwekma Ohlone had come to San Francisco's government to seek

respect for the sacred shellmound funerary places. For example, in 1992 a formal resolution had been passed regarding the shellmounds and there it sat, unenforced. "I hope this day [the city] will pass a stronger resolution and end the illegal removals of the contents and whole shellmounds in San Francisco."

Ohlone speakers raised the fact that they cannot even legally pray at the beach, as is traditional for them. They called upon the city to legislate their right to do so.

A young man sang a song in his Native language that he had learned from his elders. He pointed out that before their land was taken away, his people had sung and performed sacred ceremonies close to the beautiful ocean coastline, and also said "youth is the future."

A Mutsun Ohlone elder, Ann Marie Sayers, detailed the unnecessary difficulty the Ohlone have had due to the U.S. government's contemptuous refusal to officially recognize them as a "real" Native American tribe. This has hampered Ohlone efforts to reclaim their lands and culture, not the least of which is carrying on ancient ceremonies essential to their lives. She said that the European settlers' mission system had greatly contributed to the outright genocide of her people.

Santos Nic-Manaznilla of the Asociación Mayab spoke in Spanish instead of his Native Mayan language "because they only have a Spanish-to-English language interpreter." He spoke about the economic hardships the North American "Free Trade" Agreement has caused his people, descendants of the ancient Mayans. The tens of thousands of economic immigrants forced to cross the deadly U.S.-Mexican border, the thousands now working in low-paying hotel and restaurant jobs, are mistreated and disrespected, often working 14-hour days, to provide the bare necessities for their families. Those workers all too often cannot get necessary medical care for themselves or their dependents. He talked about the indignity and harm the Indigenous youth are experiencing, growing up in a hostile city with poverty, crime and violence all around them, never learning the proud history they come from.

Ana Pérez, assistant director of the Central American Resource Center, spoke about the fact that Indigenous peoples, in both the South and North Americas, have never been compensated for their losses. She raised that the distinct cultures of Indigenous Mexicans are not respected when they are lumped into the generality of "Latin@" in the U.S.

Larry (Cheyenne/Arapaho) said, "Native Americans here have no basic human rights." He spoke about the destruction of the environment, of the Sacred Mother Earth.

Lori Taguma (Anishinabe), of the American Indian Child Resource Center, spoke of her need at one time to move away from the city back to the Reservation—to her cultural oasis. She recounted hearing her great-grandmother's experience of being forcibly taken from her tribal home on her own land, to a non-Native, racist boarding school. She discussed the fundamental need for "California Indigenous people to identify with their own land base."

A Miwok woman told about her own mother being taken away at the age of five to a boarding school. She stated: "No sacred site should be destroyed. ... Native American people used to be able to come to sacred sites for ceremonies." She ended with, "Enough is enough; I challenge this commission tonight ... to affirm" the rights of the people.

Tony Gonzales, a leader of the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), noted that San Francisco might inspire other cities to hold hearings with their Native American communities and take action too.

Another IITC leader, Bill Simmons, spoke about the "terrorism that first came with the desecration of the sacred shellmounds of the ancestors" and that celebrating Christopher Columbus is like celebrating Adolf Hitler.

Health concerns raised

Other speakers raised immediate needs within the local community.

Mark Espinoza, director of the Native American Health Center in the Mission neighborhood, discussed the center's efforts to meet the needs of Indigenous people and any San Franciscans who enter its doors. He reviewed attempts by city agencies to close it down and "fold patients into other service centers" to save money.

Joan Benoit spoke of the work the Native American AIDS Project was doing to help local Indigenous people living with HIV/AIDS. San Francisco has the largest percentage of Native American communities with HIV/AIDS in the U.S. Benoit said that in order to continue, their efforts need more funding.

Rope Wolf, an Apache activist and member of the Bay Area American Indian Two Spirits, spoke for the needs of people with HIV/AIDS, as well as Two Spirit people and those in the LGBT community.

Alexandra Monk (Metis), a local HIV/AIDS educator, told about the federal Centers for Disease Control prediction that deaths from HIV/AIDS in the U.S. could "wipe out the Native American population by the next century."

Michelle Maas (Anishinabe) discussed the mental health needs of the Native community. She urged Indigenous representation on all policy committees, saying, "The decisions made today impact the next several generations," and that statistical discrimination by non-reporting "invisibility, omission and exclusion" is unacceptable.

Native students Eddie Dang (Tsalagi/Sauk and Fox/Native Hawaiian) and Christopher Gomora (Anishinabe) spoke of the need for cultural sensitivity in education. Gomora observed that classes at the City College were being "taught by the oppressors to the oppressed."

Sally Ramon, a Tohono O'odham elder, advocated establishing a Native American

Center where the local community of numerous tribes could safely go and practice important ceremonies. Mary Jean Robertson (Tsalagi) noted that currently the "Native American Cultural Center, with no location, is literally homeless."

A respected professor of American Indian Studies at San Francisco State University, Andrew Jolivet, brought many recommendations for the commission to act on. He noted the extremely offensive and "inappropriate statue of Christopher Columbus still prominently standing in San Francisco," and the need for an annual "Native American parade to celebrate their traditions." He asked for the endorsement of a formal B.A. degree in indigenous studies at educational institutions, increased local funding where federal funds under the Bush Administration are drying up, and the removal of the name "Junípero Serra" from the highway honoring a genocidal Spanish Roman Catholic mission priest—and renaming it in honor of Richard Oakes, a Mohawk leader of the 1969 Alcatraz occupation. Jolivet asked for a Native American charter school, a Native American Resource Room in the main public library, and for a cultural center. He called for Native American graves to be protected and preserved in compliance with federal law regarding the "housing of Native American Indian remains."

Others recounted their frustration with bureaucratic efforts to render Native peoples invisible. One Indigenous man spoke about statistics showing the groups of the many unemployed, which leave out the Indigenous identity of those who moved off their reservations for now non-existent jobs in the city. A teacher, Mishwa Lee, called for Indigenous educators in the schools, "not as unpaid volunteers, but as paid educators."

Anita Mendez (Washo) spoke, as did Morrigan Shaw (Tlingit), Frank Cullum (Chickasaw), and Myra Smith, Alberto Saldenado and Thomas Reyes. Kim Shuck (Tsalagi) gave several examples of dehumanizing "art" depicting Indigenous people in public places, including a huge mural at Mission High School. Racist public art, sports team names and mascots are a part of the overall stress and lack of respect experienced by Native peoples. Shuck said, "I can understand why these things might seem small, but statistically we die in huge numbers from stress-related disorders such as heart problems, diabetes and hypertension."

Ada Stevenson spoke about the 72 percent of Native American women who experience some kind of violence in their lives at the hands of white men.

A white couple visiting from Australia noted a recent Aboriginal victory there that included winning back a large portion of land taken from them by European settlers, including part of the city of Perth.

Hearing organizer Marcus Arana told WW: "The mayor's office stated at the hearing that the mayor is looking at creating a community task force on the issues raised. Since then the mayor's office has announced a policy symposium for Nov. 2. I have been requested to invite community leaders to participate and I have been requested to attend."

It remains to be seen if the commission and other San Francisco governmental bodies will conscientiously respond to the many serious concerns of the Native American community. Many Nations of the First People are watching.

The full hearing can be viewed at http://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=30



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Consejo de Seguridad impone severas sanciones a Corea del Norte

Por Fred Goldstein

El Consejo de Seguridad de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas ha votado 15 a 0 para imponer sanciones a la República Popular Democrática de Corea, (RPDC) en represalia a su prueba nuclear del 9 de octubre. La resolución para imponer sanciones fue a través del Consejo de Seguridad dirigida por el gobierno de los Estados Unidos, el cual tiene 10.000 cohetes nucleares y es la única potencia que ha usado armas nucleares en una guerra.

Las sanciones violan la constitución de la ONU, la cual reconoce el derecho de las naciones a su autodefensa en contra de cualquier agresión directa o percibida. Washington ha estado amenazando a la RPDC con ataques nucleares desde la guerra de Corea del 1950-1953. Las pruebas y el desarrollo de armas nucleares por la RPDC han tomado lugar estrictamente dentro del marco de infinitas amenazas por parte de Washington.

Recientemente la administración de Bush se ha referido a la RPDC como parte del “eje del mal”, amenazó al gobierno de Corea del Norte con un “cambio de régimen,” y autorizó al Pentágono en el año 2002 para que desarrollara “planes flexibles” para usar armas nucleares contra estados que no tienen armas nucleares, incluyendo a la RPDC, como también autorizó el ser el primero en atacar con armas nuclear. El Secretario de Defensa, Donald Rumsfeld amenazó a la RPDC con un ataque nuclear en el año 2003. Y el Pentágono comenzó a desarrollar una nueva generación de armas nucleares dirigidas al ataque de las plantas subterráneas de la RPDC y de Irán.

Otra parte del “eje del mal” de Bush es Irak, el cual fue amenazado con un “cambio de régimen” después del 11 de septiembre, y el Pentágono invadió y derrocó al gobierno de Saddam Hussein. Irán también está bajo constantes amenazas militares y económicas por parte de Washington.

La administración de Clinton amenazó dos veces a la RPDC con una guerra nuclear, una vez en 1993 cuando el gobierno de Pyongyang dijo que este abandonaría el Tratado de No a la Proliferación Nuclear (TNPN) como respuesta a las demandas que debía permitir intrusivas inspecciones por la Agencia Internacional de Energía Atómica. (AIEA).

Un ataque contra las instalaciones nucleares de Corea del Norte por la administración de Clinton fue prevenido sólo por las negociaciones de último minuto entre el ex presidente Jimmy Carter y el entonces líder norcoreano Kim Il Sung. Clinton llevó a cabo ejercicios nucleares

contra la RPDC en 1998.

Ahora mismo el Pentágono tiene submarinos nucleares y misiles destructores en el mar cerca de la península coreana como también aviones con capacidad nuclear en la isla de Guam. Estados Unidos ejercita pruebas militares regularmente las cuales son prácticas abiertas para una guerra contra la RPDC.

La prensa capitalista ha llamado al gobierno de Corea del Norte “paranoico” e “irracional”. Paranoico quiere decir que se ven amenazas donde no existen. Irracional quiere decir que se hacen cosas que no tienen sentido. Las amenazas de un ataque nuclear por el gobierno de los Estados Unidos son reales y han existido claramente por muchos años. Por lo tanto tiene sentido el tratar de desarrollar un plan de prevención en contra de una amenaza.

La resolución de sanciones es ‘una declaración de guerra’

La RPDC ha declarado ante la ONU que “La resolución no puede ser tomada de otra manera que como una declaración de guerra.” De hecho la resolución de sanciones viola la Constitución de la ONU, la cual prohíbe actos de agresión y protege el derecho de soberanía de las naciones.

Decía que los gobiernos chino y ruso negociaron con Washington para moderar el lenguaje de la versión final de la resolución, volviéndolo menos amenazante y agresivo.

Desde el punto de vista del desenfadado chauvinismo y prepotencia imperialista, la resolución de las sanciones puede ser considerada como “moderada” comparada con los requisitos originales que eran más

severos. Pero desde el punto de vista de la RPDC, las sanciones especificadas en la resolución sólo pueden ser consideradas como un ataque contra su supervivencia económica y militar e incluso contra su misma soberanía como nación. La resolución está llena de mandatos arrogantes de estilo colonialista.

“Demanda” que la RPDC frene cualquier prueba nuclear o lanzamiento de cohetes balísticos. “Decide que la RPDC suspenda toda actividad relacionada con su programa de cohetes balísticos” y que “abandone todas las armas nucleares y programas nucleares existentes completa, verificable e irreversiblemente”.

Pero esto no es todo. La sección 8 de la resolución, entre otras cosas, decide que “todos los estados miembros” impedirán el “suministro, la venta o la transferencia a la RPDC” de “cualquier tanque de combate, vehículo de combate blindado, sistema de artillería de alto calibre, aeronave de combate, helicóptero de ataque, buque de guerra, cohete o sistema de cohetes ... o materiales relacionados, incluyendo repuestos”. Llama incluso a la prevención de cualquier “entrenamiento técnico, servicio de asesoramiento o asistencia relacionada con el suministro, manufactura o utilización” de los materiales militares especificados.

Esto es equivalente a un mandato para socavar totalmente el establecimiento militar de la RPDC precisamente cuando está amenazada con una guerra.

Llama a todos los estados miembros a “congelar de inmediato los fondos, otros activos o recursos económicos que se encuentren en sus territorios ... que pertenezcan o estén controlados, directa o indirectamente por personas o entidades ... que participen o proporcionen apoyo a “armas nucleares o programas de cohetes balísticos y que “impidan que ningún fondo sea disponible” a tales partes.

Requiere que todos los estados miembros “tomen todos los pasos necesarios para impedir la entrada o pasaje por su territorio de las personas designadas... por ser responsables de, e incluso por apoyar o promover, las políticas de la RPDC en relación a los ... programas relacionados con lo nuclear, los cohetes balísticos, junto a miembros de sus familias”.

Esta estipulación virtualmente prohíbe a todos los oficiales de gobierno, líderes de partidos, o personal militar y sus familiares de viajar, a menos que tengan el permiso de las “grandes potencias”.

Y exige la revisión de todo cargamento que entre o salga de la RPDC. Esta demanda de que otros países revisen cargamentos de la RPDC puede ser considerada, en si misma, como una demanda de acto de guerra.

Ninguna amenaza desde Corea

La histeria más reciente impulsada por la administración de Bush y los medios comunicativos es la supuesta “amenaza” por la RPDC de conducir una segunda prueba nuclear. Están todos actuando como si la RPDC estuviera amenazando a la población de los EEUU.

A diferencia de la administración de Bush, la RPDC ha prometido no ser la primera en lanzar un arma nuclear. En otras palabras, el programa de armas nucleares de la RPDC es estrictamente un freno contra un posible ataque nuclear lanzado por Washington y nada más. También es lógica militar el que la RPDC no inicie una guerra nuclear contra el poder imperialista que tiene bastantes armas nucleares como para eliminar una gran parte del mundo.

La única “amenaza” causada por las pruebas nucleares de la RPDC es la amenaza a las ambiciones nucleares del imperialismo estadounidense en Asia y la amenaza a su capacidad de iniciar una “guerra preventiva” y llevar a cabo “el cambio de régimen” en la RPDC — una meta que ha tenido desde hace años y que aumentó después del colapso de la Unión Soviética y los países socialistas de Europa del Este.

La RPDC ya ha experimentado una guerra, dirigida por los Estados Unidos, en la cual 4 millones de coreanos murieron y todas las aldeas, pueblos y ciudades del país fueron reducidos a escombros. La RPDC fue atacada en ese entonces por la misma razón que se le ataca ahora: por ser un país socialista que niega doblegarse ante el imperialismo.

Corea fue dividida por Washington después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Las fuerzas coreanas de liberación dirigidas por Kim Il Sung habían expulsado a los imperialistas japoneses de Corea, acabando así con 35 años de brutal colonización japonesa. Pero el sur fue ocupado por tropas estadounidenses que entonces fueron armadas fuertemente por el Pentágono para prepararse para la guerra con los revolucionarios socialistas del norte.

El gobierno de la RPDC, establecido en 1948, ha ofrecido una y otra vez la base para superar la crisis. Ha formulado las demandas para el reconocimiento de su soberanía, para garantías contra ataques de Washington, para la normalización de relaciones con los Estados Unidos, incluyendo la firma de un pacto de paz para terminar formalmente la Guerra Coreana. La RPDC ha ofrecido un sinnúmero de veces propuestas para la desnuclearización de la península coreana y de la región circundante.

En su lugar, Washington ha aumentado sus amenazas y sus demandas arrogantes e intimidantes con el objetivo de acrecentar las tensiones. Ha acorralado a la RPDC en una esquina donde tiene que someterse a las amenazas imperialistas o luchar por su vida. La RPDC ha elegido luchar en defensa de si misma por la salvación nacional. Es el gobierno estadounidense quien es la verdadera amenaza a la paz y estabilidad internacional en la península coreana. □

