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Washington sabotages climate conference

Profit-hungry imperialism created global crisis

By Deirdre Griswold

The "unborn children" that the Bush administration professes to care so much about have yet another reason to curse this reactionary imperialist government. It has again dissed the world, especially future generations, by throwing a monkey wrench into plans worked out by thousands of scientists and officials to get all the countries in the world to agree on limiting greenhouse gas emissions.

It happened during the first two weeks of December at the United Nations Climate Change Conference, held in Bali, Indonesia.

Ministers and government heads attended from nearly 190 countries, most of which already have seen extreme weather events directly linked to global warming. They had been warned by scientists that urgent action is required.

In August the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, which brought together both scientists and officials, had announced that the window of opportunity to prevent catastrophic changes to the planet's climate is narrowing rapidly. Greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced between 25 and 40 percent by 2020, said the UNFCCC, or many changes may become irreversible, leading to massive extinctions of animal and plant species and economic havoc in many parts of the world.

In November the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which was recently awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, reaffirmed that view, issuing urgent warnings that a commitment must be made to turn things around and begin reducing greenhouse gases within 10 to 15 years.

But no action was adopted at the December meeting in Bali, despite two weeks of discussion.

The major roadblock, as has happened before, was the U.S. government, which at first refused to be part of any global action at all. The United States is the country most responsible for global warming.

Finally, at the very end, the delegation from Washington signed on to the weakest possible resolution: that it would take

part in more discussions over the next two years. The scientists' proposal that mandatory limits be placed on emissions was reduced to nothing but a footnote reference in the final document. That Washington agreed to anything at all was written up in the U.S. corporate media as though it were a big concession.

Among the 11,000 people present at this conference were many from NGOs that state their mission is to protect the interests of the poor of the world. For the first time, and largely because of their presence, much of the discussion focused not only on the science and technology of climate change but also on how to deal with the terrible social consequences of drought, floods, severe storms and other climate events that are predicted to grow worse in the poorest areas: drought in Africa, floods in South Asia and Latin America, melting of the permafrost in the Far North and the virtual disappearance of many island nations

Continued on page 11

Resistance in New Orleans to save public housing

Bulletin: As WW goes to the press, there are reports that on the morning of Dec. 19 a small group of housing activists chained themselves to bulldozers at B.W. Cooper, one of four public housing complexes scheduled for demolition by the Housing Authority of New Orleans and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to make room for luxury homes in New Orleans. The now majority-white New Orleans city council is scheduled to vote for or against the demolition very soon. Check www.workers.org for any important updates on this important development.

Protests say: 'Public housing, yes! Demolition, no!'



WW PHOTO: ANNE PRUDEN
Dec. 15 protest in New Orleans

New York City Hall press conference on Dec 17. See page 5

WW PHOTO: LAL ROOHEK

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MICHIGAN NEWS

by Cheryl LaBash

Rev. Edward Pinkney on hunger strike

On Dec. 14, Berrien County sheriffs arrested Rev. Pinkney at his home and confiscated his computer. He began a hunger strike on Dec. 15 and pledged to continue it until he is freed.

Why was he dragged from his home? For writing the following paragraph in a newspaper article:

“The corruption and the deceitfulness continues in Berrien County Courthouse. Judge Butzbaugh has violated his oath. I support the constitution of the United States and the State of Michigan; we are still waiting on this racist corrupt judge to do the same. Judge Butzbaugh has failed the people, the community, his duties and his office.”

Writing the paragraph is alleged to violate a fifteenth condition of his probation that prohibits “inflammatory behavior.” Pinkney became targeted by the repressive state apparatus for fighting for the rights of African-American people in Benton Harbor, daring to successfully recall a commissioner who was in the hip pocket of the Whirlpool Corporation. The recall threatened to stop a Whirlpool backed “development” plan to build an exclusive golf course over Benton Harbor’s public park on Lake Michigan, which would not benefit the overwhelmingly poor and Black community in Benton Harbor. An all-white jury convicted Rev. Pinkney of vote tampering for paying people to pass out election literature. He was sentenced to five years house arrest with an electronic tether.

The Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice, with the support of Mrs. Pinkney, issued a call for immediate action. Call Mich. Gov. Jennifer Granholm’s office at 517-373-3400 to demand that she restore constitutional rights in Benton Harbor and secure Rev. Pinkney’s release.

Union, community group or church representatives can fax the governor at 517-335-6863 on letterhead, or send a message online by going to michigan.gov/gov and clicking on “contact the governor” at the top. Scroll down to the “online forms and feedback” box and click on “share your opinion.” A form will appear where you can type in your message.

In addition to the immediate action, supporters of Rev. Pinkney are encouraged to write Gov. Granholm demanding a pardon, contribute to his legal costs, sign an online petition (available at thepetitionsite.com) and boycott Whirlpool products. A mass demonstration is planned in Benton Harbor on July 19, 2008. For more information, visit bhbanco.blogspot.com or mecawi.org.

Important Notice

To comply with postal regulations, Workers World newspaper will skip publication next week. The next issue, Vol. 50 No. 1, will be dated Jan. 10, 2008.

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Rev. Edward Pinkney

PHOTO: ABAYOMI AZIKIWE

Pro-Palestinian doctor acquitted

On Dec. 3, an Ann Arbor jury acquitted Dr. Catherine Wilkerson of two counts of obstructing police and emergency medical technicians. On Nov. 30, 2006, Ann Arbor and University of Michigan police brutally removed pro-Palestinian demonstrators from a public meeting at the university featuring former Reagan and Bush security advisor Ray Tanter. Wilkerson responded when a protester in the hands of police called out he could not breathe. He was face down and handcuffed with police pressing on him.

Wilkerson identified herself as a medical doctor and attempted to attend to the injured man, who was by then unconscious. Police twisted Wilkerson’s arm, causing injury. She objected to the improper use of ammonia inhalants by the EMTs. Since then, ammonia inhalants have been removed from ambulances.

Wilkerson was charged in February 2007 after she filed an assault complaint against the Ann Arbor police. Packed courtrooms reflected community support for Wilkerson. Her acquittal sets back attempts by university administrations in Michigan to use police brutality to restrict protest against promoters of racism and war.

Hundreds protest racism in Mt. Pleasant, Mich.

On Dec. 7, some 200 people made it clear that nooses found Nov. 12 in an engineering classroom at Central Michigan University were not a Halloween prank. The protest was organized by CMU students and supported by the Detroit Council of Baptist Pastors, Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice, the NAACP, the New Black Panther Movement and the Urban League.

Support Marie Thornton

Elected Detroit School Board member Marie Thornton was barred from full participation in the committees and day-to-day work of the board on Dec. 13. This continues a campaign of harassment against Thornton intended to stop her outspoken actions against school closings, opposition to expensive Aramark contracts (see article on cafeteria workers in this issue for more about the company) for work formerly performed by community residents, and openness with the public on school board matters.

The community in Thornton’s school board district is being denied their right to representation on issues concerning public education in this city. Contact Diane Bukowski at diane_bukowski@hotmail.com for more information or details on how to make a contribution to cover legal costs. ★

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Acquittal in Liberty Seven case

Another legal blow to phony ‘War on Terror’

By Larry Hales

On Dec. 13, the jury in the trial of Lyglenson Lemorin, a Haitian immigrant and one of seven men dubbed the “Liberty City Seven,” came back with an acquittal. The seven were entrapped in Florida by the federal government and paraded as proof and validation of the necessity for the Bush regime’s phony, racist “War on Terror.”

The jury hung on the case of the six other men, who were said to be involved in an al-Qaida-inspired type of attack on the Sears Tower in Chicago.

From the beginning, the Bush regime seized on the arrests of the men on June 22, 2006, and said that the men symbolized “homegrown” threats of terror.

However, there was little evidence and what evidence there was can best be described as smoke and mirrors. The whole case hinged on an FBI agent and a paid informant who did most of the talking. It was very similar to other frame-ups and entrapments, such as that of Derrick Shareef, a young Black man arrested in Chicago in December 2006 (see Workers World, Dec. 21, 2006).

Then Attorney General Alberto Gonzales said in June that the group was a symbol of “smaller, more loosely defined cells who are not affiliated with al-Qaida, but who are inspired by a violent jihadist message.”

A supposed key piece of evidence that the men sought affiliation with the group is a videotaped oath of allegiance to Al-Qaida. The FBI informant who went by the name “Brother Muhammad” claimed to have contact with al-Qaida, and it is this “message” of al-Qaida that the men were tied to. Yet the informant did most of the talking on the FBI recordings.

The men had no weapons and no explosives, this even according to former Attorney General Gonzales. The supposed supplier of the weapons was Brother Muhammad, who promised them \$50,000 dollars. Narseal Batiste, one of the Seven, contends the \$50,000—which is more than twice the amount of the income per capita for Miami-Dade—was the motivating factor behind the fake plot.

The defense contends that it was either a plot to take the money that was hatched by Batiste or the manipulation and coer-

cion by the FBI that propelled the conspiracy along. Defense Attorney Albert Levin said, “This was all written, directed and produced by the FBI.”

The men, who supposedly followed Batiste, were all poor, Black and from the United States, Haiti or the Dominican Republic. The warehouse where the men slept is in an area with an official poverty rate of 30 percent, one of the poorest areas of the country.

Residents in the community where the men lived said they were quiet and well mannered. Marlene Phanor, the sister of Stanley Phanor, one of the Seven, said, “All they was doing, was trying to do, was clean up the community.”

The only evidence points to a plot made by the federal government and of men whose only crime was made by the U.S.—being Black and poor.

The frame-ups are done to confuse a rising movement in the U.S. and around the world with the myth that the U.S. is under siege, and that the wars and threats of war are defensive maneuvers and to shore up democracy around the world, instead of just imperialist plunder.

The acquittal in the case of Lemorin,

who has not been released because of an immigration hold, is a blow to the Bush regime. The 33-year-old had moved to Atlanta months before the arrests and hadn’t even had contact with the group or been to the warehouse in Liberty City.

Perhaps Lemorin’s acquittal portends the result of the retrial of the six remaining men, but their fates cannot be left up to the courts. While there was a rigorous defense of the young men around the country, the anti-war movement as a whole ignored the case.

The defense of the Liberty City Seven needs to be part of a campaign that seeks to squash the racist criminal justice system that entraps majority people of color, and part of a determined anti-imperialist movement that aims to beat back the U.S. ruling class drive for greater profits from which war is an outgrowth. Its cross hairs are aimed at the poor and oppressed around the world.

The Bolivarian Youth in Miami is pushing for a mass protest calling for the freedom of the Liberty City Seven on the day that they will be retried, Jan. 7, 2008. For more information call 786-985-9048. □

A wake up call

March against racism to honor Dr. King’s legacy

The International Action Center and the Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST) youth group are initiating an important call to action around the U.S. for January 21, 2008, the official Martin Luther King Jr. birthday holiday. The call motivates people for solidarity and unity in the struggle against racism and all forms of injustice at home and abroad. It also calls for a national march in New York City along with other mobilizations around the country on this day focusing support for the Black community and immigrant rights. The following are excerpts from the call. There will be more articles on this important initiative in future WW issues. Go to www.iacenter.org to read the entire call.

There is a time for celebrations and there’s a time for fighting. Now is a time that we need to fight. On this King Holiday we must organize and march against the forces of racism, reaction and war, not just the war abroad but the war raging here at home.

The racism is not just coming from the fringes; it’s been deemed respectable and popular and it’s being pushed by the mainstream corporate media.

What’s more, the storm is gaining strength at a time when the economy is heading into a crisis that is bound to make economic survival for those who are already impoverished more difficult, while tossing millions more, who thought they were getting along okay, out of their homes and jobs.

The system is setting up its scapegoats for the hard times by gearing up for racist hate. Lou Dobbs has suddenly become very important. Why? Because in times like these, the system’s biggest worry is that poor and working people will come together and demand social and economic justice. If we fail to unite and fight racism we should only expect much more of the same.

Reports of nooses hanging in locker rooms across the country are up 1,000 percent.

Mychal Bell, one of the Jena 6, will have to stay in prison for almost another year,



but “shock jock” Don Imus is back on the air, with presidential candidates and VIPs tripping over each other to get on his show.

Immigrants have been turned into the “Willie Hortons” of the 2008 presidential elections as candidates compete with each other over who can sound the toughest against undocumented workers.

From New Orleans to Harlem and in every other part of the country, Black people are being pushed out of their homes as the drive by the wealthy to gentrify, helped by hurricanes and mortgage foreclosures, is barreling full steam ahead. The wholesale incarceration of a generation of young Black people is not slowing down; it’s accelerating. The police war against Black youth is not easing; it’s growing.

More immigrant workers have been arrested in raids, denied housing and health care, locked up in concentration camp-type detention centers, deported, harassed, beaten up or murdered, than at any time since the infamous anti-immigrant Palmer raids 90 years ago. And just like 90 years ago, anti-immigrant bigotry and repression are being used to derail labor union organizing.

Bush’s endless war is not only against people thousands of miles away, it has made Muslims and people of Arab, African or South Asian origin fair game for harassment, persecution and torture.

Lest we forget, from the Supreme Court to bigoted cops, jailers, judges and anti-gay thugs, the rights of women are under attack, and there is war against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

Along with anti-immigrant bashing and attacking Mexico and China, Dobbs has lately begun to call on union members who are “American citizens” to rise up against “treacherous” labor union leaders who dare to organize undocumented workers.

Combating the divide-and-conquer strategy is going to take work, time, courage and commitment. One of the most obvious ways to fight it is to work to make sure that the thousands of white people who will get on buses to go to a protest against the war in Iraq will also get on the buses going to support a Jena 6 rally or an immigrant-rights rally. When that happens it makes demagogues like Dobbs weaker and all of us stronger. □

Dinner raises funds for Peltier’s art

The Leonard Peltier Support Committee held a potluck holiday dinner in honor of Native American political prisoner Leonard Peltier at the International Action Center office in New York on Dec. 17.

Attorney Lynne Stewart, whose case arising from her energetic defense of an alleged “terrorist” goes to court again on Jan. 29, attended, as did activists from the Free Mumia Committee and from the Justice and Unity Campaign at WBAI, along with many others. The dinner raised funds to help pay for Leonard Peltier’s art supplies, bought from the prison commissary.

In the photo, supporters hold up a poster made from a self-portrait by Leonard Peltier, who has been in prison for over 31 years on what many have shown to be trumped-up charges of murdering two FBI agents during the 1975 shoot-out at Pine Ridge, S.D.

—Report and photo by Sara Flounders



Michael Tarif and Evelyn Warren

Police brutality case continues, support grows

By Sara Flounders
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Two prominent Black New York City attorneys who were the victims of police brutality were back in court on Dec. 17. Michael Tarif Warren and his spouse, Evelyn Warren, face charges of obstruction, disorderly conduct and resisting arrest.

At a Web site set up on the case, justiceforwarrens.org, they explain: “We were stopped at a traffic light in rush-hour traffic, on our way to a legal meeting, when we saw members of the New York City Police Department apprehend, handcuff, and kick and stomp a young Black man. We asked the officers why they were doing this and ended up beaten and arrested ourselves.”

Activists from around the city converged on the 77th Precinct in Brooklyn after it was announced on WBAI and on several Web sites that the Warrens had been beaten and arrested on June 21.

A large number of anti-police-brutality and community activists packed the courtroom for their arraignment the next day and for a hearing on Oct. 23.

Michael Tarif Warren is well known for his handling of police brutality cases over many years, including those of Michael Stewart, Yvonne Smallwood and



PHOTO: ROBERTO MERCADO

Michael Tarif Warren, Evelyn Warren with supporters including Sara Flounders and Lynne Stewart, on the right.

five Black teenagers charged in what was called the “Central Park Jogger” case.

At the court hearing on Dec. 17 supporters in strong numbers again turned out. At the hearing it was agreed that the two cases—Michael Tarif Warren’s and Evelyn Warren’s—would be consolidated. The prosecution was also ordered to turn over the contact information on all non-police witnesses and information gathered from several surveillance cameras. The next court day is set for March 3.

At an impromptu rally of supporters in the lobby of Brooklyn Criminal Court held immediately after the court hearing, Michael Tarif Warren thanked the large gathering for coming on a bitter cold early Monday to again pack the court. He reminded supporters that as he said from the beginning: “This will be a protracted struggle. We have always known this.”

Michael Tarif Warren explained: “We are not the issue. It is what we represent: the struggle against police brutality and

the struggle against the police occupation of our communities. We will fight this to the end because we come from the people and we are fighting for the people. This case may not come to trial before the summer. We plan to try this case in the African manner and to bring out all the contradictions.”

Evelyn Warren said, “The DA could have chosen to dismiss the charges. Since they have not, then the fight continues, and we will continue to fight.” □

Gulf Coast Reconstruction Program resolution passed

Special to Workers World

Nov. 1—Many of us in the trade union movement who were active in the civil rights and Black liberation movements are very clear as to the ramifications of the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. There are those of us who view the challenges of Katrina and Rita as the primary civil rights struggle of the 21st century.

Like the system of Jim Crow, established following the first Reconstruction in the late 1800s, the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and its impact on defining the political and democratic priorities of the U.S. and thus the democratic rights of Black people represents a new chapter and period of African-American national oppression within the structure of the U.S. political and economic system.

The U.S. government and corporate strategy for rebuilding New Orleans in particular and throughout the Gulf Coast in general will form and shape the government policies defining the democratic rights of Blacks, the working poor and people of color, in cities, communities and regions throughout the U.S.

This resolution offers an opportunity to make those historical links that were demonstrated during the March on Washington in 1963, where labor and the civil rights movement had a strong coalition.

A similar resolution was adopted by Local 10 supporting a Gulf Coast Reconstruction Program in October 2007.

In solidarity,
Clarence Thomas

The following resolution was adopted by the delegates’ meeting of the Central Labor Council of Alameda County on Nov 5. It was submitted by Clarence Thomas, delegate to the Council from ILWU Local 10. The resolution calls for a federally funded public works program (like the WPA of the 1930s), the Right of Return of evacuees, and an end to state repression, ethnic cleansing and police brutality in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast.

WHEREAS, During the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina the world watched the United States government stand by and let thousands of African Americans and poor people in New Orleans and throughout the Gulf Coast suffer and hundreds die a most tragic and unnecessary death;

WHEREAS, Robert “Tiger” Hammond, president of the Greater New Orleans AFL-CIO, recently said, “Parts of this town look like a nuclear bomb hit two days ago, not like it was two years ago”;

WHEREAS, The AFL-CIO Housing Trust (HIT) is participating in the \$1 billion Gulf Coast Revitalization Program for New Orleans and other communities ravaged by Hurricane Katrina;

WHEREAS, The AFL-CIO will be investing in the building of modular housing and will coordinate union-sponsored worker training programs;

WHEREAS, The AFL-CIO community fund and affiliated unions have raised millions of dollars to assist Katrina survivors;

WHEREAS, ILWU Locals 10, 19, 52, and the International in conjunction with the African American Longshore Coalition sent several 40-foot containers of humanitarian and construction supplies and vehicles, along with financial support, to the Gulf;

WHEREAS, Members of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters volunteered to drive trucks filled with supplies to the Gulf for survivors;

WHEREAS, The American Federation of Teachers has dispatched tutors and specialists to assist local workers in preparing for apprenticeship opportunities, investing its resources in the people of New Orleans despite the city’s attacks on public education and wholesale privatization of education;

WHEREAS, Almost immediately after Katrina, President George W. Bush issued an executive order suspending prevailing wage requirements on federally funded projects. Bush and the Republican-controlled Congress suspended affirmative action requirements, relaxed environmental regulations, and started handing out privatized, no-bid contracts like they were bottled water;

WHEREAS, In the weeks after Katrina and Rita, New Orleans witnessed an influx of more than 150,000 workers from outside the region, many of them recruited from Mexico and Central America by temporary agencies;

WHEREAS, Fifty percent of migrant day laborers were never paid for their work and the New Orleans

Workers Center has countless stories of transient workers who showed up at a certain location to get paid and instead were met by ICE agents and deported;

WHEREAS, Katrina brought about the largest displacement of African Americans in the U.S. South since the post-Reconstruction period at the end of the 19th century;

WHEREAS, The ACLU has released a report revealing continuing incidents of racial injustice and human rights abuses in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina;

WHEREAS, These violations include reports of heightened racially motivated police activity, housing discrimination, and prisoner abuse;

WHEREAS, On Aug. 29 through Sept. 2, 2007, an International Tribunal on Hurricanes Katrina and Rita was held in New Orleans made up of an international panel of judges from seven countries, a prosecution team of leading attorneys from across the country, and experts and witnesses (survivors) who provided testimony regarding human rights abuses and crimes by the government at all levels (federal, state and local);

WHEREAS, Both Katrina survivors (witnesses) and prosecutors at the International Tribunal on Hurricanes Katrina and Rita called for a reconstruction program to rebuild the Gulf;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the Central Labor Council of Alameda County, AFL-CIO support the call for the implementation of a federally funded Gulf Coast Reconstruction Program which shall include prevailing wages for workers and the right to organize; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, The Gulf Coast Reconstruction Program include the right to return to the Gulf, a Gulf Coast Public Works Program (similar to the WPA of the 1930s), an end to state repression via police brutality and racial profiling, and building solidarity committees nationally to continue the struggle for a just reconstruction and an end to ethnic cleansing in the Gulf Coast; and

THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this Resolution be sent to our affiliates and forwarded to the democratic leadership of the House, the Senate and the Congressional Black Caucus. □

NEW ORLEANS

Reprieve won on housing demolition

By Richard Kossaly
New Orleans

A reprieve that temporarily halted the demolition of low income housing in New Orleans was won in court on Dec. 14. The attorneys representing tenants and those representing the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and Housing Authority of New Orleans came to an agreement that the demolition would not go ahead before the City Council had public hearings and made a ruling.

By New Orleans law public housing cannot be demolished without first being approved by the City Council, yet HUD and HANO had colluded to destroy thousands of low income units by granting no bid contracts to well-connected firms. The HUD secretary and others are currently being investigated for corruption.

The court challenge on Dec. 14 was made after tenants' lawyers discovered the law and filed a lawsuit. It is reasonable to assume that the willingness of HUD and HANO to defer to the City Council was motivated by the poor legal footing on which they stood when they came to the agreement. They might also have more faith in the willingness of the new majority-white City Council to accede to their intentions in the long run.

The following is an excerpt from a statement sent out by The Coalition to Stop the Demolitions. The full statement is posted at brownfemipower.com.

"We are fairly certain that at least three of the white City Council members are going to vote against us, including Jacquelyn Clarkson, Stacy Head, and Shelley Midura. There is a possibility that Arnie Fielkow, the current Council President, might vote in favor or abstain in order to not lose favor with a sector of the Black electorate whom he will need to fulfill his Mayoral aspirations. As for those who may stand with us, there are likely only two members



WW PHOTO: SHARON BLACK

Washington D.C. activists protest demolition at HUD's offices Dec. 13. Rev. Lennox Yearwood of the Hip Hop Caucus and students from Students for a Democratic Society conducted civil disobedience by blocking streets in front of HUD.

who are solid. These are James Carter and Cynthia Willard-Lewis. The third Black Council member, Cynthia Hedge-Morrell, is definitely a critical swing vote. We need

to put pressure on each and every one of these City Council members between now and the 20th (please stress outreach to Internally Displaced Persons in your area

In support of public housing, San Francisco

Labor Council opposes New Orleans demolitions

The following resolution was unanimously adopted on Dec. 10.

Whereas, the Housing Authority of New Orleans announced at its Nov. 29, 2007, public meeting that the authority and the federal Department of Housing & Urban Development had scheduled the demolition of four public housing projects in New Orleans, beginning as soon as Dec. 15, 2007. They are the St. Bernard, Lafitte, C.J. Peete, and B.W. Cooper housing projects, in addition to the Fischer development already scheduled for demolition. According to the New Orleans Times-Picayune newspaper (Nov. 29, 2007), approximately \$30 million in contracts have been approved for demolition of the five developments; and

Whereas, housing advocates in New Orleans say the plan to destroy public housing is a means of discouraging poor residents, who had been displaced after Hurricane Katrina, from moving back to their homes and neighborhoods in New Orleans—despite the fact that an inspection by MIT engineers found the public housing buildings structurally sound and easily renovated; and

Whereas, a disproportionately high percentage of the displaced people are African Americans; New Orleans housing advocates point out that big real-estate interests and private developers have been eager to tear down and redevelop the poor neighborhoods to make way for profitable business development; and

Whereas, the New Orleans-based Coalition to Stop Demolition issued this statement: "What is at stake with the demolition of public housing in New Orleans is more than just the loss of housing units—it destroys any possibility for affordable housing in New Orleans for the foreseeable future. Without access to affordable housing, thousands of working-class people in New Orleans will be denied their human right to return. Although this situation is unique and urgent in the city of New Orleans, it does not occur in isolation. The plans for redevelopment here are part of a national assault on public housing, in which tens of thousands of homes have been demol-

Continued on page 14

MARXISM, REPARATIONS and the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper. Edited by Monica Moorehead. Includes:

Racism, national oppression and self-determination by Larry Holmes

Black labor from chattel slavery to wage slavery by Sam Marcy

Harriet Tubman: woman warrior by Mumia Abu-Jamal

Causes of turmoil in Jamaica by Pat Chin

Black youth: repression & resistance by Leilani Dowell

Black and Brown unity: A pillar of struggle for human rights & global justice! by Saladin Muhammad

Are conditions ripe again today? 40th anniversary of the 1965 Watts Rebellion by John Parker

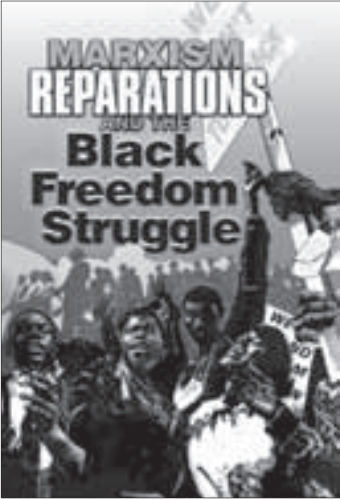
Racism and poverty in the Delta by Larry Hales

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GRAPHIC ON THE COVER BY SAHU BARRON

Venezuela warms up the South Bronx



For the third winter in a row, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is providing heating oil to poor people in the United States. At a Dec. 14 news conference held in a South Bronx oil terminal, Venezuelan ambassador Bernardo Alvarez announced plans to help 250,000 families in more than 20 states this season.

"This is a gift coming from the heart of the Venezuelan people," said CITGO President Alejandro Granados. CITGO, which is owned by the Venezuelan government, is donating 45 million gallons of heating oil.

Former U.S. Rep. Joe Kennedy gladly accepted the oil on behalf of his nonprofit group. He pointed out that only 16 percent

of families eligible for federal heating oil assistance get it.

Kennedy, whose father Robert was assassinated in 1968, said that he wrote to every oil company for help. Only CITGO responded. Among those that refused was ExxonMobil, which made a \$39.5 billion profit last year.

Dozens of people attended this news conference. They included community organizers Vicente "Panama" Alba and Nellie Hester Bailey, director of the Harlem Tenants Council.

For information on this program, which provides a one-time delivery of 100 gallons of heating oil, call 1-877-JOE-4-OIL.

—Report and photo by Stephen Millies



New CD at www.Leftbooks.com **Pam Parker Live: Bread & Roses**

Live selections from Busboys & Poets, Takoma Park Folk Fest & Signature Theater's Cabaret. Beautiful vocals by Pam Parker and Jobari Parker. Songs included are Bread & Roses, Mean to Me, My Foolish Heart, Voodoo Woman and more! Fifteen songs in all.

Cafeteria workers strike against poverty wages

By Brenda Ryan
New York

Every day since Nov. 12, a group of cafeteria workers have held an energetic picket line outside the New York Life Insurance building in Manhattan. Employees of Aramark, they are demanding a 70-cent per hour pay hike.

It's a pittance for Aramark, a food services contractor that raked in \$11.6 billion in sales last year and paid its CEO \$16.2 million.

Most of the workers have been employed by Aramark for 20 years and earn \$10 to \$14 per hour, which comes out to less than \$500 per week, said Floridalma Mayen, an 18-year veteran of the company. "Everything goes up but our wages," she added.

Mayen stood outside the building on a frigid Monday afternoon as the strike went into its fifth week. In addition to the 50 workers at the New York Life building, 36 Aramark employees at 55 Water St. are also on strike. The workers, members of UNITE HERE Local 100, have been without a contract for the past year.

Aramark is offering them only a 50-cent per hour increase and refusing to make the increase retroactive. Mayen said that

in the last three years they've had a mere 55-cent per hour raise.

The cafeteria workers are not alone in the struggle. "We have a lot of support from the customers," Mayen said. New York Life employees have boycotted the cafeteria and refused to renew enrollment in a pretax dining plan until the strike is over. And on Dec. 11 civil rights leader Jesse Jackson showed up to offer his support. Jackson, who had a previously planned meeting with the chairman of New York Life, joined the workers afterwards and told them he had spoken on their behalf to Aramark and the head of New York Life.

Aramark employees at other sites are also prepared to battle for better wages as their collective bargaining agreements with the company expire at cafeterias around the city. UNITE HERE said Aramark food service workers at the Fashion Institute of Technology, Bank of New York and Citigroup have already voted to authorize a strike at their locations. The union said that if Aramark does not raise their living standards, workers at cafeterias at CBS, Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan Chase and the United Nations could join the strike as their contracts expire.

The food service giant has a long

record of poverty wages and poor working conditions. Earlier this year, the U.S. Department of Labor found that Aramark failed to pay proper wages and benefits to some food service employees at Los Alamos National Laboratory. New Mexico Business Weekly reported in an April 12 article that following the investigation, Aramark paid \$153,440 in back wages and fringe benefits to 72 employees. In 2004, the Baltimore Wage Commission found that Aramark, which operated food services at the Baltimore Convention Center, violated the city's overtime laws for two years. The Baltimore Sun reported that the company subsequently paid 283 workers \$131,000 in back pay.

UNITE HERE and the Service Employees International Union have compiled information on Aramark's mistreatment of workers at the Web site factsonaramark.info.

Aramark employees, meanwhile, are fighting to bring more workers into the union. Last month Aramark workers at PriceWaterhouseCooper on Madison Avenue submitted a petition to their employers asking for a fair process to decide whether to organize a union. Crains New York Business reported Dec. 11 that

seven of the 20 food service workers at Citigroup's executive dining room at 53rd Street and Lexington Avenue were suspended for two days after they submitted a petition to Citigroup chairman Robert Rubin stating their desire to unionize.

In a quarterly report filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission June 29, Aramark said that approximately 37,000 employees in its U.S. operations are represented by unions and covered by collective bargaining agreements. Noting that unions are seeking to increase the representation of its workforce, Aramark stated: "We have always respected our employees' right to unionize or not to unionize. However, the unionization of a significantly greater portion of our workforce could increase our overall costs at the affected locations and affect adversely our flexibility to run our business in the most efficient manner to remain competitive or acquire new business."

Aramark workers in Manhattan and around the country won't allow Aramark to continue to grow its profits by paying them poverty wages. "We'll stay on strike until the company gives us retroactive pay and 70 cents [more per hour]," Mayen said.★

On Int'l Human Rights Day

Workers demand collective bargaining, end to racism

By Dante Strobino

On Dec. 10, International Human Rights Day, public-sector workers in North Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia—in a common struggle to deepen the protections under state law for collective-bargaining rights, and all organized by the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America—held simultaneous news conferences announcing the most recent step in the International Worker Justice Campaign.

They are requesting that the Inter-American Council on Human Rights, a body chartered under the Organization of American States, investigate why workers are denied the fundamental human rights to organize and collectively bargain labor contracts with their employers.

The workers in these three states all suffer from different conditions and laws but they all share the fact that none of these states protects their right to collectively bargain. North Carolina, the state with the worst laws and conditions, where public-employee collective bargaining is actually illegal, was the prime focus of this action.

For several years, UE along with Black Workers for Justice and other community and labor organizations have been building a grassroots movement to demand repeal of General Statute 95-98, the North Carolina law prohibiting collective bargaining for public workers.

North Carolina and Virginia are the only states in the country where collective bargaining for public workers is prohibited by law.

The UE's "request to the OAS is the third international legal initiative undertaken by our union in the fight to win collective bargaining rights for all public employees. Cases have also been brought before the human rights agency of the United Nations and, through the efforts of Mexico's FAT,

[Authentic Workers' Front] under the side agreements to the North American Free Trade Agreement," states the UE website.

The OAS has historically been a tool by the U.S. to diplomatically undermine the economies in Latin America—for example, the anti-worker NAFTA—but underscoring the 1848 prognosis of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels that capitalism creates its own gravediggers, poverty and repression are igniting pro-worker resistance throughout the region.

Connecting workers' rights with fighting racism

In the last three years, this campaign has organized hearings in several cities across North Carolina to speak out against work conditions. A highlight of that campaign was in November 2005 when members of the United Nations International Labor Organization from several countries participated in a hearing where workers from all over the state testified about their working conditions and the need for collective bargaining.

Then, in September 2006, city workers in Raleigh were being forced to work overtime without pay, amidst other grievances, and waged a militant two-day walk out. It was not until the workers built their union and expanded their demands that they found any justice. This past November, they finally won a settlement from the city, awarding them back overtime pay.

Last February, the ILO released a 90-page report with its findings, indicting North Carolina for violating international law. On Feb. 10 more than 3,000 people, mostly African American, met and marched in the streets in the NAACP's "Historic Thousands on Jones Street People's Assembly" to demand collective bargaining for state workers along with a slate of 13 other demands for the North Carolina Legislature.



UE organizer Ashaki Binta at press conference.
PHOTO:UE

This is not a struggle unfamiliar to UE Local 150. Back in 2004, during the IWJC public hearing in Rocky Mount, workers testified about how in

the spring of 2004 a dummy was hung at a city work site, and linked this with other incidents of racism at that time.

In 2005, the UE supported several Black Department of Transportation workers, called the "DOT 7," who filed a lawsuit against the state after a noose was left hanging for a month over their work bench.

Most recently, since the Sept. 20 Jena march of tens of thousands, there have been nooses found at state work places at Eastern Carolina University and North Carolina State University, and two were found in a bucket with red paint, symbolizing blood, at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte. UE-organized workers at all three of these universities have been fighting back.

Most recently, they held a news conference and rally at UNC-Charlotte to denounce the nooses. Statewide, UE Local 150 has also recently been implementing anti-racist union stewards' trainings for prompt, on-the-job organized resistance to racism.

Strobino is a member of the youth group Fight Imperialism-Stand Together (FIST) in Raleigh, N.C., and is also an organizer with UE in North Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia.

Grocery giant uses anti-immigrant intimidation to stall union drive

By Milt Neidenberg
New York

Nine hundred FreshDirect warehouse workers in the midst of a union organizing campaign are under attack from Immigration and Customs Enforcement in collusion with their employer, a Queens, New York-based online grocery delivery corporation. The company has suspended several dozen workers, predominantly Latina immigrants, and fired a few.

A union election is scheduled for Dec. 22-23. Both the Teamsters and United Food and Commercial Workers are on the ballot, along with a “no union” option. The company and ICE have embarked upon an illegal, ruthless anti-immigration investigation to sabotage the union campaign.

From 12 to 18 hours daily, the workers labor under mandatory overtime, standing in near-freezing temperatures to insure the freshness of the food they pack, price and label. They prepare the boxes, many heavy with canned goods, for the truckers and delivery helpers. For this exhausting labor where it’s winter all year long, they make around \$7.50 an hour and no benefits. A supervisor reportedly told workers, “What’s wrong with working so many hours? Now you don’t have to look for a second job.”

Teamster Local 805 is the most visible, fighting back with picket lines and rallies, reaching out for public support, and exposing the brutal conditions the warehouse workers endure.

Local 805 has charged the company with unfair labor practices. FreshDirect should be investigated and charged with

violations of the Fair Labor Standards Act and the health and safety statutes under the Occupational Safety and Health Act. Under these brutal conditions, the warehouse workers desperately need their own organization and it looked like a union victory was a sure thing.

Enter ICE, the gruesome guest invited by FreshDirect to wreck the organizing campaign with a reign of terror and fear.

On Dec. 9 at 4:30 a.m., as the workers were reporting for their shift in the bleak cold darkness, supervisors shocked them with a memorandum stating they were the target of ICE. Engulfed with fear of being detained and handcuffed on the job—and most terrible of all, being separated from their children—some workers chose to return home.

At work stations, supervisors demanded the workers produce papers proving their immigration status was legal. “Some people just walked out the door,” said Sandy Pope, president of Local 805. “They were sobbing [as they carried] garbage bags of clothes from their lockers. They didn’t feel they had any chance of fixing their paperwork, so they just left.”

Employees were warned by company officials not to show up for their paychecks, a grim threat that ICE would pick them up. Union officials scrambled around to find friends and supporters who could pick up paychecks for the workers.

‘No match’ a life-and-death illegal operation

Here was Bush’s “shock and awe” brought into the workplace, and calculated to break the will of the workers to support a union organizing drive. But

the terror campaign is symptomatic of a broader sinister plot to rid the country of those who have come here from their impoverished homelands.

ICE’s national “no match” campaign—in concert with the Internal Revenue Service and the Social Security Administration—to force 12 million immigrants to prove their “legal” status is threatening the labor movement. FreshDirect claimed they received “no-match” letters from the SSA informing them that Social Security numbers provided by several workers were not legitimate.

Teamster President James Hoffa has questioned the right of ICE to investigate FreshDirect employee records. Hoffa quotes ICE’s own internal policy: “ICE will reserve [hold] immediate action on any information received concerning employment of undocumented or unauthorized aliens ... where it appears that information may have been provided in order to interfere with or to retaliate against employees for their rights” to form a union. ICE, a neofascist agency in the Department of Homeland Security, is operating above the law.

According to UE News Update, on Oct. 10 Calif. Judge Charles R. Breyer “ruled that the Bush policy is illegal, and ordered the Department of Homeland Security to halt it immediately. [His] decision also bars the Social Security Administration from sending out 141,000 no-match letters to employers, covering more than eight million employees. ... The judge said the government had failed to follow proper procedures in issuing the new rule, which would have ‘massive ramifications.’ ... The policy would have made

employers liable based on SSA ‘no-match’ letters.” (Oct. 13)

Government bureaucracies are under orders to provide data riddled with errors in identification and misinformation to ensnare immigrant workers. The UE report states that “12.7 million of the 17.8 million discrepancies ... belong to native-born U.S. citizens.”

FreshDirect cooperated with ICE and the SSA illegally to entrap the workers and disrupt the union election. They turned on the very workers who are paying into the Social Security Trust Fund.

They must answer as to how they received these letters, which violate the federal judge’s restraining order. Did ICE and Homeland Security violate Judge Breyer’s ruling? Suspended and fired workers must be returned to their jobs with full restitution pending an immediate independent investigation by the Teamsters, the UFCW and other interested parties.

No worker is illegal!

“Divide and conquer,” say the government and the bosses, as a capitalist crisis is imploding by the hour. This struggle cries out for united independent class-wide action in concert with the organized labor movement.

This attack on 12 million immigrants, documented and undocumented, can and must confronted and repelled. What has happened to FreshDirect, Smithfield, New Bedford workers and the many more thousands who have been hounded, driven underground, arrested and separated from their children is the challenge of the day. □

32BJ Workers say NO! to the bosses’ capitalist crisis excuse

By Arturo J. Pérez Saad
New York

On Dec. 12, about 15,000 members of Service Employees Local 32BJ marched from 42nd Street and Broadway to the Rockefeller Center offices of the owners of rich commercial properties in New York City. Some chanted, “32,” and others responded “BJ,” followed by “What do we want?” to which “Contract!” was the response.

It was a very militant and colorful march. Workers carried placards in Spanish, Polish and English.

These Service Employees union members clean, maintain and service huge commercial buildings around the clock. The local representing 26,000 multinational workers is demanding a decent contract. They have authorized a strike for New Year’s Day in New York City, New Jersey, and Stamford, Conn., if there is not a settlement. They are mobilizing to show their unity and strength again on Dec. 20.

The owners of more than 1,000 commercial office buildings make up the 70-year-old Realty Advisory Board on Labor Relations. The New York Times reports that the RAB “cited Wall Street’s troubles, the subprime mortgage crisis and the country’s economic jitters” as a reason for not giving the workers a raise. “The industry ... could be facing a very stormy, choppy period,” Paul Salvatore, general counsel to the RAB, told the Times. (Dec. 11)

They are blaming the capitalist crisis—a crisis they along with Wall Street co-conspirators created—in order to continue superexploiting the service work force and deny the union’s modest demands.

Workers, organized and unorganized, take note. Bringing the economic capitalist crisis to the bargaining table is a portent that the bosses will crack down on the entire labor movement to make the workers pay for the growing capitalist crisis. This makes class-wide solidarity more urgent than ever.

“We tell them that a 1 percent increase in our compensation will cost them only about 2 cents a square foot,” said Local 32BJ President Mike Fishman. “That’s

hardly anything compared with the increases they’ve received of more than \$20 a square foot in rent since 2004.” (New York Times, Dec. 11)

The bosses are preparing a scab work force in an attempt to defeat the workers if they strike.

The RAB is made up of the vilest real-estate venture-vultures like Tishman Speyer, “a leading owner, developer, fund manager and operator of real estate in the world” according to Forbes. Speyer, in alliance with Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc., has aggressively taken over Archstone-Smith Trust, the third biggest Real Estate Investment Trust in the U.S. Speyer has a global portfolio worth \$20 billion.

As the capitalist ruling class attempts to further drive down the standard of living of the international working class, continuing illegal wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as the theft of pensions in the U.S. and abroad, the workers worldwide—in France, Spain, Germany, Greece, Latin America—have been staging militant fights back. Local 32BJ is challenging the bosses in the same spirit.

All progressive and pro-union forces should mobilize and support the workers of Local 32BJ in its just struggle for a decent contract and—most important—to combat the blatant assault on the working class by the capitalist vultures. □

Yes! I support the publication of ‘In our hands is placed a power THE FLINT SIT-DOWN STRIKE’

One of the most significant labor battles of the last century was the Great Sit-down Strike. Seventy years ago, the workers of Flint, Mich., held General Motors plants for 44 days. Their heroic occupation forced GM to finally grant recognition to the UAW, setting the stage for the great wave of strikes and sit-downs that brought hundreds of thousands into the ranks of organized labor.

There is much to be learned from that dynamic struggle. There are lessons about solidarity and courage in the face of adversity, and about the daring tactics that beat the company despite incredible odds. There are lessons about the necessity of women’s involvement and about the indispensable contributions of Black and immigrant workers. There are lessons about taking on the state, class-conscious leadership, the rejection of red-baiting and bigotry,

and slogans still needed today.

These lessons and the history behind them are the subject of "In Our Hands is Placed a Power: The Flint Sit-down Strike," a new book from World View Forum set to come out next year.

The author, Martha Grevatt, has written extensively on the crisis facing auto workers for Workers World newspaper.



A Chrysler worker and UAW member herself for over 20 years, she has spent many hours researching the sit-down.

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FIST holds anti-racism forum

By Workers World Boston bureau

Fight Imperialism, Stand Together held a militant forum against racism and violence against women here on Dec. 15, calling for a fight back movement. Rachel Hassinger opened with a description of FIST and an invitation for all to get involved.

Jonathan Regis of the Justice for Hector Rivas Committee said, “The fight for justice for Hector Rivas is an example of Black and Brown unity and working class peoples standing up.”

Sara Mokuuria discussed the growing attacks on women, focusing on the Megan Williams case. She said, “The time has come for people who are truly about revolution and anti-imperialism to understand that at the core of those struggles is dismantling of racism, sexism, homophobia.”

Carol Anderson, mother of one of the Somerville Five, described how solidarity was responsible for the fact that her son was free and in college today.

Natural Bliss gave a rousing Hip Hop performance focusing on the need for women to militantly and fearlessly stand up against all chauvinism and oppression. Stephen White from Springfield Mobilization Against Poverty Racism and War spoke of the formation of the group to fight back against police brutality against youth of color in Springfield.

Miya Campbell closed, linking all the struggles to the struggle against capitalism and the need for revolution, saying, “Revolution is the fuel that sparks the fire.”

All were encouraged to participate with FIST in militant marches against racism and for immigrant rights on the Jan. 21 Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. The next FIST local planning meeting was announced for Jan. 2, at the Action Center, 284 Amory St, Jamaica Plain. For more info call 617-522-6626. □



WW PHOTOS: LIZ GREEN



THE ‘MITCHELL REPORT,’

By Mike Gimbel

On Dec.14, George Mitchell—the former Senate Majority Leader who has served as chairman of the board of the Walt Disney Company and a director of Staples, Inc., as well as a board member of the Boston Red Sox—reported on his “Investigative findings” in the use of steroids in Major League Baseball.

At a Dec. 15 White House news conference, President George W. Bush, former owner of the Texas Rangers baseball team, praised the Mitchell Report. The corporate media attacked the players smeared by Mitchell as “steroid abusers.”

What’s wrong with this picture? Where have we heard all this before?

Remember the other “War on Drugs”? Capitalist politicians crying crocodile tears over drug use led to hundreds of thousands of men and women from the oppressed communities languishing in jails, while drugs continue to flood those communities.

Remember former Secretary of State Colin Powell at the United Nations with all the “proof” that Iraq had “weapons of mass destruction,” resulting in the destruction of a country purely because it



sat on a lot of oil?

Why believe the bosses now? Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig represents the owners. It was Bud Selig who unilaterally selected fellow owner George Mitchell to make this “impartial investigation.”

Donald Fehr, executive director of the Major League Baseball Players Association, issued a press release response. Here is some of what he said: “Commissioner Selig named former Sen. George Mitchell to investigate steroid use in baseball. This

decision was made unilaterally, without prior consultation with the MLBPA. ...We did request a meaningful opportunity to review this lengthy report prior to today, but the request was denied. ...We must remember that a strong collective bargaining relationship requires mutual respect for the agreements that have been reached.”

The “Mitchell Report” is an owners’ attack on the MLBPA, the baseball players’ union.

Competitive edge equals more profits

Have you seen the enormous size of today’s players in the National Football League, college players and even the many high-school football players who weigh 300 pounds and more?

‘PERFORMANCE ENHANCING DRUGS’ fact of life in schools

By Caleb T. Maupin

Much attention has been paid to the use of “performance-enhancing drugs” by athletes. But such substances flow all throughout our society. Take a day in the life of an average working-class youth.

Working-class youths arise early in the morning, sometimes as early as 4 or 5 a.m. In order to fully awaken a substance is often consumed. Perhaps it is merely coffee. Perhaps it is a can of Red Bull or Jolt. Perhaps it is some caffeine pills called speed. These substances get the heart beating at a high speed. Suddenly these youths get an artificial awake feeling as they go off to school.

Caffeine is known to be addictive. Young people may find themselves having to take this drug every day to just to feel normal. Caffeine is also known to hurt short-term memory and have many other dangerous side effects.

Once at school, the youth will sit at uncomfortable desks and listen to a teacher. Often children have difficulty sitting still in class. This is enhanced by the lack of physical education and elimination of even recesses in many schools.

Three percent to 7 percent of the children in this country are diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. They are given drugs such as Ritalin to keep them “under control” and at an activity level that is acceptable to their teachers and parents.

A 2005 University of Texas study suggests that Ritalin may be carcinogenic. Of the 12 children they gave Ritalin, every single one had an increase in chromosome abnormalities, which have been linked to heightened cancer risk. (medicinenet.com) But the Food and Drug Administration continues to approve its use, and many schools are now mandating parents to put their children on such drugs.

Ten percent of males ages 6 to 18 are currently using Ritalin or other psychotropic drugs. (News Blaze, Nov. 20) Parents are told that their children need such drugs to get good grades and test scores. Young people are constantly being pushed to succeed, something that grows ever harder with the state of the U.S. economy.

Meanwhile, a drug known as Adderall is now being abused by 7 percent of U.S. college students. This drug was made to treat ADD and ADHD, but it is now being used by all kinds of youths who feel it will enhance their studying and focus skills. The drug also causes insomnia, paranoia and an increased heart rate. Too much of the substance can even cause a heart attack or a stroke. According to all reports, the drug is growing in popularity among college and high school students who are looking for anything they can to get an extra edge in the world of competitive academics. (wlns.com, Nov. 30)

After school, youths often find themselves going directly to a job. The education they require to achieve their goals will cost a huge amount of money. Perhaps they need another kick of energy to do this job efficiently after working hard all day at school.

After finally finishing with their job or their extracurricular activities, the young people will come home. They will be tired and worn out, but their hearts will still be pumping. They will need to unwind. They may require a sleeping pill to get to sleep. The market is loaded with drugs that will put them to sleep after they have loaded themselves up with stimulants all day.

Perhaps they will unwind with some of the “youth” programming on MTV and VH1, which dazzle with images of the super-rich. Programs like “Crisis” and “Rags to Riches” keep the young in this desperate crusade, with images of huge estates, diamond-covered iPods, and the “good life” that a slim minority of the U.S. population actually lives.

Steroid use is clearly a bigger problem in a sport like the NFL where only 10 drugs are tested for, unlike the 30 tested for in MLB. Yet all attention is focused on the pro baseball players and almost none on the pro football players.

The difference is that the team owners have never been able to defeat the MLBPA over the course of many strikes and lockouts, while the pro football players’ union was defeated in its one attempt at a strike.

Sports are big business. The owners could not defeat the players at the bargaining table, so the owners, in collaboration with the government and the media, are using the steroids weapon to place the MLBPA on the defensive.

It is laughable that these capitalist pirates claim that they care about “sportsmanship” and a “level playing field.” Sports, “amateur” or “professional,” is just like other industries. It is based upon making profits. The players are the commodities used to increase the bottom line.

The New York Yankees have a player payroll that is triple the payroll of many of their competitors. Where is the “level playing field”? College football and basketball are big businesses, while paying nothing to the players. Is that a symbol of “good sportsmanship” or simple greed?



But it’s always possible, the TV promises, if they just continue to endure the torture of “American” life. Perhaps they will take anti-depressants or anti-anxiety medications to deal with the stress of trying to get to the top or just get by in this world where so few do. Forty-four percent of people in the United States currently take prescription drugs; 16 percent are currently taking three or more substances prescribed by a doctor. (Badger Herald, Dec. 11)

Perhaps they will crack like so many have before. Incidents like those at Virginia Tech and Columbine should remind us that not all youth are able to withstand this lifestyle.

In “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts,” Karl Marx writes about how “labor not only produces commodities, but the worker himself as a commodity.” Marx also wrote, “The only wheels [capitalist] political economy puts in motion are greed, and war among the greedy.”

This is what human beings, especially the youth, have been reduced to. We are rewarded not for our intelligence or hard work, but for our usefulness as a commodity. How good an employee will we be at a job? How much profit can we turn for some boss down the road? This is what is learned by our academic performance.

This is the world of 21st century capitalism, where everyone in my class is my rival, where I am expected to step on others to succeed, where millions of youths go mad in pursuit of a good life, where just to get by in this society young people need to take potentially deadly chemicals.

This system where human beings are milked for all their worth to make profits for a few until it drives them mad should be abolished. □

corporate & media steroids witch-hunt

When teams extort millions of dollars from communities by threatening to move to another city, isn't that an actual crime? When did extortion become legal and a symbol of "good sportsmanship"? Football injuries are a much greater health risk than steroid use. Alcohol consumption at a game is a much greater health risk than steroid use. Race car drivers and jockeys face huge risks of injury in every race, whereas steroid use is far down the ladder in comparison. Where's the severe crisis that requires such an "impartial investigation"? "Performance-enhancing" drugs, secret training methods, specialized sports equipment, etc., have been used and accepted in

sports as a way to gain "an edge" for millennia. Why the out-of-proportion media-driven "crisis" over steroids? Every player and every team tries to "get an edge." It's an accepted part of sports. Every time I watch a baseball game or a football game, for instance, I see players trap balls and try to act like they actually caught the ball so as to fool the umpires and referees. In football, the announcers actually criticize a team for failing to quickly snap the ball, thereby preventing the referees or the other team from challenging the play, when they knew that the catch wasn't made! Isn't "cheating" being praised in that instance? The players involved are the victims, no

matter how high their salary. I have written several articles in defense of Barry Bonds. Now I'll have to add Roger Clemens to that defense, although I can't put an equal sign between them. The years of racist attacks on Barry Bonds cannot be equated with what has just occurred to Roger Clemens. The two players are similar in age and had similar outstanding careers at an advanced age. There were constant rumors of steroid use by Roger Clemens, yet until now it was only on Barry Bonds at whom the corporate media aimed their fire. That's racism, pure and simple. Where is the "impartial investigation" into the lies that brought us the Iraq invasion? Where is the "impartial investiga-

tion" into torture of prisoners? Where is the "impartial investigation" of the government response to Hurricane Katrina? How does the health risk of steroid use in baseball rank against those items? Far down the list, yet the corporate media play it non-stop on the news. This is a witch hunt. With the steroids issue the owners and the corporate media are making a mountain out of a mole hill. *The writer is a former consultant on player evaluation for the Boston Red Sox and Montreal Expos and current delegate of Local 375, AFSCME, to the New York City Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO.*

AMPHETAMINES, capitalism's first 'performance enhancing' drug

By Gary Wilson

Performance enhancers may have been used in almost all competitive sports since the first Olympics in ancient Greece. But the rise of the capitalist profit system and the giant pharmaceutical monopolies changed performance enhancement into its opposite. The most important enhancement has become the performance of the corporations' profits. Yu-Hsuan Lee at Harvard has documented that there are records of the use of performance enhancing drugs going as far back as ancient times. Lee cites, "The Greek physician, Galen, is reputed to have prescribed 'the rear hooves of an Abyssinian ass, ground up, boiled in oil, and favored with rose hips and rose petals' to improve performance."

Lee then adds, "Ancient Olympic athletes attempted to boost testosterone (the hormone that anabolic steroids are designed to produce) by eating sheep testicles, a prime source for testosterone."

Modern chemistry introduced the possibility of more concentrated forms of enhancers, now commonly called drugs and steroids. A Romanian chemist in Berlin synthesized amphetamines from the stimulating herb Ma Huang in 1887. Nothing much came of it.

Then in the 1930s the U.S. pharmaceutical company Smith, Kline & French (now GlaxoSmithKline) started marketing it as Benzedrine. Officially it was sold as a medical treatment for narcolepsy. Unofficially it was one of the first drugs being pushed as a performance enhancer. German athletes in the 1936 Olympics were given amphetamine injections, as was Adolph Hitler.

"In the 1936 Olympic Games films, Hitler can be seen moving his hands back and forth on his upper legs in a way that's consistent with the 'stereotypical behavior,' of heavy amphetamine use," says a report on "Meth in the military." (www.allpositiveoptions.com)

The online Science Encyclopedia says that amphetamine use was widespread in World War II. "Soldiers on both sides were given large amounts of amphetamines as a way of fighting fatigue and boosting morale. The British issued 72 million tablets to the armed forces. Records also show that Japanese Kamikaze pilots—who crashed their bomb-laden planes into enemy ships—and German Panzer troops were given large doses of the drug to motivate their fighting spirit. Hitler's own medical records show that he received eight injections a day of methamphetamine, a drug known to create paranoia and unpredictable behavior when administered in

large dosages." (science.jrank.org) Hitler is not the only government head known to have regularly used amphetamines. John F. Kennedy also received injections from his physician. After World War II, Smith, Kline & French emerged as a key player in the military-industrial complex, making a killing in the drugs it sold to the military. After the war, new markets were created for this "performance enhancer," which was being pushed to workers throughout industry—from steelworkers facing fatigue on their grueling shifts, to auto workers on the assembly line, to long-distance truck drivers. Then during the Vietnam War, the U.S. troops were flooded with easily available amphetamines, though by that time the

drug had become an allegedly controlled substance because its destructive effects were well established. It is now known that all too frequently the war crimes committed by U.S., German, British and Japanese troops during World War II were the result of the maniacal effects of drugs like the amphetamines. The same is true for the U.S. troops in the Korean and Vietnam Wars. The soldiers were being given drugs that were destroying both their bodies and their minds, but kept them going as fighting machines. The real crime was committed by GlaxoSmithKline and the other capitalist pharmaceutical conglomerates, which pushed the drugs and later the steroids that raised their profit line while destroy-

IN A WORKPLACE OR ON A PLAYING FIELD Drug use is widespread

By Monica Moorehead

The "Mitchell report" on the impact of steroid use and performance enhancement drugs inside Major League Baseball is flawed for many reasons, especially its anti-union—meaning anti-player—and pro-owner content and tone. This report is only one piece within a larger societal epidemic inside of the U.S.—widespread drug abuse and addiction, including alcoholism. A report released this past July by the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration—an agency under the auspices of the federal Department of Health & Human Services—stated that one out of 12 full-time workers acknowledged using "illegal" drugs within a month's period. Based on sample interviews with 40,000 civilian, non-institutionalized workers in annual surveys from 2002 until 2004, the "Worker Substance Use and Workplace Policies and Programs" report said there are more than 10 million workers who used "illegal" drugs. (oas.samhsa.gov) According to this study, "illegal" drugs include marijuana or hashish, cocaine, heroin, hallucinogens, inhalants or prescription drugs. To put this number in a broader context, with 6 percent of the world's population, the U.S. accounts for 60 percent of the world's "illegal" drug market. (National Drug Task Force Journal) The HHS states that the highest rate of workers within their statistics were restaurant workers, at more than 17 percent,

followed by construction workers at more than 15 percent. In terms of age groups, younger workers between the ages of 18 and 25 proved to be the most prevalent users of drugs. There are more "illegal" drug abusers who are employed than unemployed and more workers with a decent income who use these drugs compared to those with a low income. Contrary to these facts, there are more people in prison on misdemeanor drug convictions, a disproportionate number of them Black, Latin@ and Native. In a separate HHS survey on the impact of abuse of alcohol—a legal drug—more than 10 million workers, or 8.8 percent, admitted to excessive alcohol drinking within the same one month period. This growing trend of drug and alcohol abuse is occurring at a time when there is less drug treatment, including preventive programs, and more random drug testing by the bosses. Close to 49 percent of full-time workers in this survey said that their employers conducted testing for drug use. For those who test positive, they are much more likely to face being fired than getting some kind of treatment. **Drug use a result of capitalism** What all of these facts and figures fail to explain is that the fundamental cause of this social epidemic lies in the capitalist system—that is, the drive to make more and more profits through fierce competition. As massive layoffs deepen, the downward spiral in workers' wages and ben-



Drug profits fueled performances at the 1936 Nazi Olympics.

ing so many lives. None of this will change until the system is changed to make medicines and drugs that are only to meet peoples' needs, not pharmaceutical company profits. □



PHOTO: SP MEDIA

NFL quarterback Brett Favre, carrying a teammate, made public his addiction to painkillers in 1996.

efits, speed-ups in the form of "employee performance" and forced competition against other employees are wreaking havoc on the workers' mental, emotional and physical well-being. Just as professional athletes increasingly turn to drugs to increase their performance in the highly competitive sports arena, workers fretting over whether the next paycheck will be their last many times turn to drugs to keep their adrenalin going on the job or to ease their pain. The bosses, who rule over the majority of the world's economy, would rather punish the workers for lost profits or markets—and it doesn't matter if it is the restaurant business or professional sports—rather than on the capitalist system itself, which puts making profits before meeting the needs of the people. Drug and alcohol abuse will only become things of the past once everyone is guaranteed a right to a job, health care, housing, education, recreation and many more rights that can only be achieved under socialism. □

Campaign demands access to abortion for poor women

By Kris Hamel

Fighters for reproductive justice for poor women are stepping up their campaign to overturn the Hyde Amendment, a reactionary law enacted by Congress in 1976 and signed by Democratic President Jimmy Carter in 1977. The Hyde Amendment denies women on Medicaid the right to funding for abortions. It is named for its archreactionary sponsor, Henry Hyde, a former long-term Republican congressman from Illinois. President George W. Bush awarded Hyde the “Medal of Freedom” on Nov. 5 for his role in denying reproductive rights to low-income women. Hyde died on Nov. 29 at the age of 83.

Earlier this year the National Network of Abortion Funds launched the “Hyde—30 Years Is Enough!” campaign to repeal the anti-woman, anti-poor law. Activists had hoped that a Democratic-controlled Congress would respond to their initiative by introducing and passing legislation restoring Medicaid funding for women to choose abortion. The law is renewed yearly as part of federal budget appropriations.

However, the struggle has been an uphill battle thus far.

The Hyde Amendment now includes limited funding by Medicaid for abortions for pregnancies caused by rape or incest and those which cause a woman’s life to be endangered. Medicaid used to cover more than one-third of all abortions for women in the U.S., but since 1977 it has paid for virtually none. Coverage for abortion is also denied to women military personnel and their dependents, women receiving Indian Health Service care, women on disability insurance and immigrant women.

African American Women Evolving, a reproductive rights organization which is part of the campaign, states that “Black women are three times as likely as white women to have an abortion and also represent a large percentage of women living under the poverty line. They must use already limited resources that would otherwise be used for basic living necessities to obtain an abortion. ... Denying ACCESS



WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO
Washington, DC April 25 ,2004

is discriminatory. The reality is that women with the least ACCESS to health care are those with the fewest economic resources who are disproportionately women of color. The right to have an abortion is a constitutional right, and rights can only be realized through ACCESS.” (aaweonline.org)

Access to medical care and the ability to pay for it, especially reproductive health care that includes abortion, is a major factor in women’s right to choose. More than 45 million people in the U.S. have no health insurance, and for those who do, one-quarter of them spend 10 percent of their income on medical costs not covered by their insurance. Without access and affordability, low-income women, women of color and young women are denied reproductive justice.

The “Hyde—30 Years Is Enough!” campaign, which includes hundreds of organizations, has launched a “Repeal Hyde” petition drive with the goal of 20,000 signatures to present to Congress on Jan. 22, 2008, the 35th anniversary of the Supreme Court decision in Roe v. Wade, which legalized the right to abortion. In less than two months, more than 10,000 signatures have been obtained.

The petition outlines the fundamental unfairness of the amendment, including the fact that it “denies women access to a medical service simply because they are poor. Too often, low-income women are forced to use money meant for rent, utility bills, and food to pay for an abortion. Due to racial inequalities and the racial distribution of poverty, women of color and immigrant women disproportionately rely on Medicaid for their health insurance. Therefore, the Hyde Amendment especially burdens women of color and immigrant women.”

All progressive activists and organizations are being urged to circulate the petition to their e-mail lists to help the campaign reach its goal of 20,000 signatures by Jan. 22. Go to www.hyde30years.nnaf.org to sign the petition and to download a copy for Web sites and e-mail lists. □

Panicking central banks running out of options

By Jaimeson Champion

The U.S. Federal Reserve and the central banks of four other major economies, in a frantic effort to stem the deepening economic crisis imperiling the global capitalist system, announced on Dec. 12 that they would use \$100 billion to attempt a coordinated bailout of some of the world’s largest commercial banks.

Then the U.S. Federal Reserve, The European Central Bank, The Bank of England, The Swiss National Bank and The Bank of Canada upped the amount on Dec. 18 and promised \$500 billion in synchronized infusions of money to commercial banks over the following two months.

This infusion of liquidity will involve so-called “auctions,” where the commercial banks can get what basically amounts to cash advances for worthless collateral. It is the latest move in a series of unsuccessful attempts undertaken by the Federal Reserve and other central banks over the past few months to bail out the major commercial banks.

The response from central banks indicated they are following a strategy similar to the one they followed in past capitalist crises of overproduction. In past crises, such as in 1987 and 1998, central banks were able to mitigate the damage from the crises by flooding the markets with liquidity.

This time around, their strategy is not working. Past financial crises were centered in smaller economies and involved smaller financial institutions. For instance, the 1998 crisis centered on the collapse of a single hedge fund, Long Term Capital Management. While certainly a large hedge fund, Long Term Capital Management was only one financial institution among many. Thus it was easier for the Federal Reserve to collaborate with other central and commercial banks to contain the fallout.

The current crisis does not involve just a single hedge fund collapsing and creating a lack of liquidity in the financial

markets. Rather, it involves a host of the largest and most integral financial institutions in the global capitalist economy becoming completely insolvent. Banks in almost all of the imperialist countries are loaded down with worthless securities, what Karl Marx termed “fictitious capital,” and their liabilities far exceed their assets. In other words, the banks themselves are bankrupt.

There has already been a run on the Northern Rock Bank in England. Depositors literally lined up outside the bank’s headquarters and demanded their money back. The specter of bank runs on a multitude of the world’s largest commercial banks is clearly a growing possibility that the central banks are deadly afraid of. They are attempting to do everything they can think of to try and stave off a complete collapse.

And it now appears that they are running out of options. A Dec. 14 report showed a marked increase in inflation in the U.S. The report of increasing inflation comes at the same time that the U.S. economy is plunging towards recession. “Stagflation”—which is the unusual combination of rising inflation and a stagnating economy, and is every central banker’s worst nightmare—is poised to strike the U.S. economy with a vengeance.

Even former Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan, who would be very careful not to stir up fears, warned of this stagflation. “We are beginning to get not stagflation, but the early symptoms of it,” Greenspan said on ABC television.

The Federal Reserve is in a “Catch-22” situation. The economy is in a downturn. Bankers and investors are screaming for more rate cuts and liquidity injections. But the Federal Reserve can’t continue pumping money into the markets without further exacerbating inflation.

It appears the Federal Reserve, the most powerful financial institution in the world, has its hands tied at a time when the global capitalist economy is facing the most serious threat to its stability since the Great Depression. □

Inflation: believe your pocketbook, not the Fed

By G. Dunkel

The working class is being hit with two economic punches. One is the housing crisis and foreclosures tied to failing subprime loans. The other is rising inflation.

The Federal Reserve Bank—the Fed—is often presented as the economic “superman” that always shows up to save everyone from economic disaster. In reality, the Fed is the bankers’ bank and is concerned only with the interests of the bankers.

As the central bank, it controls the money supply. The big commercial banks get loans from the Fed’s central bank at a rate much lower than any regular person could ever get. In the subprime crisis, the Fed is now trying to bail out the banks and Wall Street by lowering the interest rates it charges on the loans it gives to the big banks that are in trouble.

Lowering interest and making money easily available to the big banks can definitely be inflationary.

In the second week of December, the Labor Department reported the most serious rise in inflation in decades with a 14.1 percent rise in energy costs, a whopping 34.8 percent jump in food costs, and the biggest monthly increase in wholesale prices since 1973.

In response, the Fed suggested that inflation isn’t really bad. To do this, the Fed cited the Core Inflation Rate, which disregards the dramatic food price hikes and the steadily rising transportation and energy costs, closely tied to the volatile rise in oil prices.

Relying on this falsely low figure, the central bankers said, “Readings on core inflation have improved modestly this year” and that this type of inflation is “mild” and not a grave concern.

For workers, any kind of inflation can

be very serious because it cuts into the value of their wages, their savings and their pensions. Inflation can rightly be called a pay cut for workers.

But how can any economic index be justified that ignores food, energy and heat? Everyone must eat, get to work and warm their homes.

Inflation shows no signs of slowing down. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, “The Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers increased 0.8 percent in November,” which is just shy of 10 percent on an annual basis.

Besides the flood of money that the Fed is pumping into the U.S. economy—that is, more dollars chasing the same amount of goods, the classical definition of inflation—there are two other inflationary pressures at work.

Prices are rising in China, because even though millions of workers are joining the urban working class, labor is still in short supply in its booming economy and wages are increasing. Since the U.S. imports huge amounts from China, this spike in prices is going to have a major impact on inflation in the U.S.

The falling dollar has probably reached a tipping point. Foreign countries now want a premium to take dollars for their goods, whereas in the past, the dollar was propped up by its use as a reserve currency. This year the dollar has fallen more than 10 percent against a basket of foreign currencies. The economists are still arguing, not about whether the fall of the dollar will affect the rise of prices, but about how much.

So when you go to the store and you have to spend more to bring back less, believe your pocketbook, not what the papers and the media say. □

The Iowa Democratic Party debates:

A war for the ‘middle class’

By Dante Strobino
Spencer, Iowa

The Democratic Party candidates for president, amidst all their benign rhetoric about “better futures,” “hope” and “sacrifice,” are attempting to straddle an impossible gulf—between the workers and the bosses of this country. All the candidates are talking out of both sides of their mouths to appeal to both class camps while intentionally repeating lies meant to confuse the U.S. working class into the worst of all deliriums—that we are all “middle class” people with common interests.

The candidates have spent the last few months attempting to convince all Iowans of these same class lies in order to win their support during the Jan. 3 caucus. The latest nationally televised debate took place in Des Moines, Iowa, on Dec. 13.

The moderator opened the debate with a question about the economy. Not a single candidate among those present—Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, Christopher Dodd, Bill Richardson, John Edwards and Joe Biden—mentioned the acute housing crisis affecting millions of people who have already lost their homes or are on the brink of foreclosure due to the banks’ predatory policies. None thought it relevant to mention the Bush regime’s Dec. 6 announcement of its latest inept policy regarding this crisis.

Nor was it mentioned that the U.S. senators currently running—Obama, Dodd, Clinton and Biden—all strategically were not in Washington to vote for a major bill that will affect working people world wide: the U.S.-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement (H.R. 3688), a move to deepen the horrors caused by NAFTA. These four, along with Republican candidate John McCain, were the only senators who did not cast a vote.

In the Nov. 15 debate at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, Clinton and Obama admitted they would have voted for the bill, although they both told something

different to a gathering of trade unionists. In fact, Clinton has voted yes to all free trade deals since she has been in the senate.

According to Jobs with Justice: “The new labor protections in the Peru FTA are merely cosmetic. Instead of requiring compliance with the very detailed International Labor Organization Conventions, this new agreement refers to the much more vague, two page, 1988 Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The detailed ILO Conventions are what really spell out what a ban on child and forced labor means in practice.

“In addition, the Peru FTA allows secret trade dispute resolution panels to interpret and apply these minimal rights in the Declaration differently than they have been interpreted and applied by the ILO itself. Even Tom Donahue, President of the U.S. Chamber of Congress, has noted, ‘the labor provisions (in the Peru FTA) cannot be read to require compliance with ILO Conventions.’

“Just like trade agreements before it, this FTA’s investment chapter will put U.S. environmental, food safety and other public interest protections in jeopardy of direct challenge by foreign investors in secret international tribunals.” (jwjpdx.org)

Not one of these candidates had the backbone to stand up and vote no to this bill. Meanwhile, all of them spew carefully worded rhetoric to appease both the bosses and the workers—an impossible task—about NAFTA and other trade deals. They do this by demonizing China, Mexico and other oppressed nations for “using slave labor” and “manipulating currency,” when in reality it is the U.S. corporations that are setting up “special economic zones” where these practices occur. They completely let the U.S. corporations and bosses off the hook.

When later asked about the energy and environmental crisis, not one candidate

mentioned everyday, real effects these crises have on the working class. Lagoons of hog waste sitting in poor and Black rural neighborhoods created by the pork industry, arsenic poisoning the drinking wells due to the coal mining industry’s practice of mountaintop removal—you will never hear about this in these debates.

Nor did they mention any campaigns similar to the heating oil programs of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez which, as last year, are giving heavily discounted natural gas to the working poor in many U.S. cities who cannot afford the heating bills.

No candidate mentioned the uneven effects of global warming, as seen across the world in rising water levels, tsunamis, hurricanes, droughts and floods. Instead Clinton called for a “new kind of American patriotism” to help with the energy and environmental crisis.

Of all the candidates, John Edwards speaks most directly to interests of the working class. He constantly speaks out against corporate interests in Washington, and has taken the most time of all candidates to visit with trade unionists.

Some might recall work he did with UNITE-HERE or standing on a picket line at the Smithfield hog slaughtering facility in his home state of North Carolina, which ironically, of all the candidates’ home states, has the lowest unionization rate. But does Edwards really care about workers? During his term as senator he never once visited the Smithfield facility, nor made any public statement to defend the union campaign that has been going on there since 1994 and has drawn international attention.

Another labor situation in North Carolina that has gained international attention, including a powerful report from the UN’s International Labor Organization, is the Jim-Crow legacy General Statute 95-98 that prohibits collective bargaining. Edwards has never even batted an eye at this obvious viola-

tion of workers’ basic human rights. Are we to expect him now to have a whole new lease on life with his repeated concerns for “middle class” families?

Who is the “middle class” anyway?

In equally rich and disgusting double-speak, Hillary Clinton claimed during the UNLV debate that she won’t fix the problems of Social Security on “the backs of middle-class families and senior citizens”—while referring to a trillion-dollar tax break that would only affect those earning over \$97,000 a year. That is one mighty middle class.

Obama responded, stating that “only 6 percent of Americans make more than 97 thousands dollars a year. Six percent is not the middle class, it is the upper class.”

Dodd also talks about the “middle class” and insinuates that this would include “37 million of our fellow citizens who are living in poverty.”

At the end of the day, none of the candidates have clean, honest records of supporting working-class organizations or trade unions, nor do they have a clean record on “free trade” deals that devastate workers internationally. Neither have any of the candidates done much to protect working people across the globe from the horrors of environmental destruction.

None has a good record or position regarding immigration. None wishes to support the self-determination of working people in oppressed countries, including Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine

So whose side are they on, really?

We, workers and oppressed of the world, cannot just wait and vote for these talking heads of the bourgeoisie to solve our problems. We must come together, build unity and organize ourselves for a better future!

Strobino has been a union organizer with UE in Iowa throughout the last few months of debates and caucus preparations. He was also a union organizer in North Carolina.

Washington sabotages climate conference

Continued from page 1
as sea levels rise.

Also under discussion was how to reduce emissions while promoting sustainable development in poorer countries. So far, according to the Global Footprint Network, only one country in the world—socialist Cuba—has been able to build up its infrastructure and raise the people’s educational and health levels without impacting adversely on the environment. Among the proposals at the Bali meeting was an “Adaptation Fund” that would provide some help to developing countries having to deal with dramatic changes in the environment.

A side meeting organized by developing countries heard an analysis by some of the social groups present that “revealed the depth of inequity the poor would face from some of the solutions that were being discussed,” commented Pakistani ambassador Munir Akram, who currently chairs the G-77 plus China group. (Inter Press Service, Dec. 17) That meeting drove home the message that there was a “missing perspective in the discussion” of the official conference, said Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, the Asian regional policy coordinator for Action Aid. “It can no more be limited to a discussion only about the environment. What we have

in Bali are questions about politics and power, like the issues of trade and finance being taken up. That is why we are here.”

Action Aid, which originated in South Africa, used the conference in Bali to raise the perspective of “environmental justice.” The approaches being pushed by the wealthy imperialist countries would leave the underdeveloped countries—made that way by years of colonial domination and plunder—to take the brunt of climate change with the fewest resources.

How can this happen?

It is hard to imagine a more urgent and universal problem than global climate change. Scientists are no longer ambiguous or doubtful about it; rather, they are crying out in anguish that work must start immediately to turn the clock back before it is too late. Moreover, polls have shown that most people in the United States are aware of the dangers and are willing to support measures and regulations that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Indeed, whole new industries are now selling products that supposedly will benefit the environment—although they amount to little more than a drop in the bucket.

On the government level, however, nothing much seems to happen. And each year the scientific projections keep

getting more ominous.

To understand this criminal dilly-dallying one must look beyond the personality of George W. Bush and his immediate cronies to the record of U.S. imperialism’s impact on the world over many generations. Take the beautiful island of Bali, for example, where the conference was held.

Just a little over four decades ago, in 1965 and 1966, the streams and rivers of Bali ran red with the blood of communists and nationalists when the Indonesian military overthrew the Sukarno government and installed General Suharto as the new ruler. Even the U.S. media admitted that the fascist coup killed upwards of 1 million people.

The generals had the blessings and material support of the CIA and the Lyndon B. Johnson administration in Washington.

On Bali, an estimated one-tenth of the population was slaughtered as the military went from village to village, picking out the activists—students, workers, farmers, women—and killing them.

The Suharto regime did exactly what U.S. big business wanted. It opened up the vast territory of Indonesia to breakneck exploitation. Vast fortunes were made by transnational corporations that pumped out the oil, cut down the mighty rainforests,

and established factories where once there were green fields.

Bali and other islands were developed as havens for wealthy tourists. The mangrove swamps that had protected the shoreline were cut down to create beachfront hotels—some of which were washed away in the terrible tsunami of 2004.

The generals took their cut of this “development,” but the lion’s share went to wealthy investors in the West.

Global warming and climate change are the heritage of centuries of this kind of imperialist plunder of the earth’s people and resources, which frequently brings the added devastation of war, as we see today in Iraq and Afghanistan. All the suffering, all the crimes carried out by the capitalists and their agents have never yielded to conferences and discussions, no matter how well meaning. They have the power and they use it primarily to secure the profits that keep their system going. Everything else is window dressing.

The grim prospect of global climate change can only deepen the revolutionary mass struggle to bring down capitalism that is surely coming. It must be replaced with a socialist planned economy, like Cuba’s, that can bring about human development for all, free of the rapacious and destructive profit motive. □

BOLIVIA:

Indigenous majority confronts rich separatists

By Dee Knight

The Indigenous majority of Bolivia mobilized massively Dec. 15-16 to defend its gains made by the Constituent Assembly that concluded Dec. 12. Leaders of the old racist European-origin oligarchy declared “autonomy” Dec. 15 in the eastern provinces of Santa Cruz, Tarija, Beni and Pando. These provinces comprise more than half the national territory, but only about a third of Bolivia’s population. They also hold most of Bolivia’s natural gas and petroleum wealth and the richest agricultural land.

President Evo Morales placed the armed forces on alert. Government supporters outside Santa Cruz, the center of the “autonomy” movement, took up arms and created blockades, according to a CNN report. Tens of thousands of people mobilized on Dec. 15 in La Paz, the capital, in defense of the new constitution. “We won’t permit Bolivia to be divided,” President Morales declared to the crowd. “They must give back the money they took from us,” he said. “We will retroactively investigate all the big fortunes, and the corrupt are now trembling with fear.”

“Bolivia is a nation among nations,” Morales said, referring to the diversity of Indigenous peoples whose traditions date back centuries. “We are not a country of blue-eyed, green-eyed folks only. It’s a pluri-national country made up of dark-skinned and white-skinned. This new Constitution will unite us.” (CNN, Dec. 12)



Some of the thousands who mobilized in La Paz Dec. 5. The banner says “The Guaraní Nation supports the new Constitution. Long live Indigenous autonomy.”



Morales is a member of the Aymara nation, who together with the Quechua people and 35 other Indigenous nationalities make up the overwhelming majority in this country of 9.5 million. These proud people, descendents of the centuries-old Inca civilization, were enslaved by the Spanish conquerors and have remained essentially oppressed and exploited until the current struggles, which brought Morales into office in December 2005.

President Morales’ administration nationalized the oil and gas industry in 2006, over the protests of the elite and their backers in the large transnational oil companies. Now, in the new provisions to the Constitution, the majority Indigenous communities will have local authority, their 37 languages will become official languages of the country, and—most horrifying to the oligarchy—they will have the right to regain land taken from their ancestors over generations.

The new Constitution also provides for new taxation of the rich, in order to return the national wealth to the people.

Leaders of the oligarchy boycotted the Constituent Assembly, where these proposals were approved. But they still protested in horror at the results. “Evo [Morales] is putting us on the road to chaos with ideas that discriminate against people who are not indigenous,” declared the president of the separatist Pro-Santa Cruz Committee in a Dec. 16 interview with the New York Times. The elite “autonomy leaders” drafted regional charters that would give provincial officials power over natural gas royalties, agricultural policies, and police forces. They also propose to limit migration of Indigenous people to the eastern provinces from the Altiplano (high plain), where the majority lives.

There is irony in the former slave owners moving to declare autonomy after the descendents of the slaves and forced

laborers have risen up to reclaim what was stolen from them. And they seem to believe they have a just claim for “self determination” against the new government that for the first time in 500 years truly represents the majority of the people. As ridiculous as it seems, the elitists are dead serious, and appear to have confidence—possibly due to support from the giant oil companies and the imperialists in Washington.

But Morales and the Indigenous majority are serious, too, and are ready to fight to keep their country together and return its stolen riches to the people. The slogan at a vigil of thousands of Indigenous miners, peasants, neighborhood organizations and others outside the Constituent Assembly when the new measures were announced on Dec. 12 was, “Ahora sí empieza el cambio!” [Now, for real, the change begins!] (Indy La Paz, Dec. 12) □

U.S.-Britain gay-bashed Afghanistan

By Leslie Feinberg

In the months after the autumn 2001 imperialist military invasion, a rash of gay-bashing and gay-baiting articles about Afghanistan appeared in the U.S. and British corporate media.

Many of these articles purported to analyze sexualities and genders and the organization of the sexes in Afghanistan.

In some of the coverage, “experts”—who are not Afghan—focused on sexual and social organization in Pashtun culture, the majority culture in Afghanistan, as though it was the only culture. Other non-Afghan “authorities” didn’t differentiate between the diverse cultures in that ancient land, including the Durrani, Ghilzai, Wardak, Jaji, Tani, Jadran, Mangal, Khugiani, Kuchi, Safi, Mohmand and Shinwari; or Uzbek or Arab. Most reports did not differentiate between peoples of the lowlands and those in the mountain ranges, or between peoples who lead nomadic lives and those who dwell in crowded cities. And speculations only focused on same-sexuality between male-bodied individuals.

Colonialism and imperialism have always studied the cultures they sought to conquer and destroy. The job of embedded anthropologists is ultimately always to claim cultural superiority—the rotten plank on which white-supremacist ideologies stand.

Not a word coming from the imperialist occupiers about Afghan cultures has any validity. Some of the most bigoted theories these articles rehash and spew about same-sex love and gender expression, and their relation to women’s oppression, do need to be exposed and combated.

Imperial anthropology

The organization of the sexes, socially accepted sexualities and gender expressions in Afghanistan are rooted in that country’s ancient history, and are not the same as in the U.S. or Britain. The existence of other forms of social organization and sexual and gender expression challenges the biological determinists who argue that sexuality is genetically fixed in the human species.

Therefore, colonialists and imperialists have historically used racist characterizations like “obsessive sodomy,” “promiscuity” and “unnatural sexuality,” and gender-phobic baiting of oppressed males as “effeminate” or “hyper-masculine” to excuse the inexcusable: imperial domination and exploitation. Brian James Baer, associate professor of Russian Literature and Translation at Kent State University, wrote about the bias in the spate of Western reporting about sexualities in Afghanistan in an article in the Gay and Lesbian Review, March-April 2003.

Baer noted, “Journalists repeatedly used Western concepts such as ‘gay’ and ‘the closet’ to characterize the Kandahar situation, thus imposing their notion of homosexuality as a minority identity.” And, he added, “In their reporting Western journalists insisted on reducing relationships that are often long-term emotional bonds to a crude sexual bargain.”

Baer pointed out: “Maura Reynolds of The LA Times noted that ‘there is a strong streak of dandyism among Pashtun males. Many line their eyes with kohl, stain their fingernails with henna or walk about town in clumsy, high-heeled sandals.’ But this equation makes sense only if we accept two Western assumptions: that homosex-

uality and effeminacy are automatically linked; and that the practices described are in fact ‘effeminate.’”

Baer stressed: “Despite statistical evidence demonstrating that pedophilia in the West is more common among heterosexual men, the association of homosexuality and the sexual abuse of children remains prominent in Western anti-gay discourse, propelling ‘save our children’ campaigns to restrict their contact with gay adults. By constructing age-stratified homosexual activity in Kandahar as pedophilia, Western journalists provided themselves a link to the ever-popular issue of child abuse—especially hot, what with the unfolding scandal in the Catholic Church.”

Baer took journalist Michael Griffin to task for writing in The Times of London that the Taliban hated women and that resulted in making sex with other males popular in Afghanistan. On the eve of invasion, articles in the imperialist media centered on the claim that the Taliban was repressing same-sexuality.

Baer also challenged Griffin for flipping the argument in the same article by claiming that woman-hating appears to be “the product of a repressed homosexuality.” Readers were spared theories about what is at the root of women loving women.

The claim that same-sex love arises from hatred of women or that misogyny is rooted in unexpressed homosexual desire pits sexes and sexualities that are both oppressed under patriarchal class rule against each other.

Most of the imperialist war-time media reports claim that many males in Afghanistan have sex with each other because of “extreme segregation of the sexes.” Some of the same journalists did not attempt to reconcile the contradiction

to their theory when they quoted Afghan males who are married to women and have sex with other males.

The “prison” theory of homosexuality is an old one. It assumes that heterosexuality is hard-wired and “natural” and that sex between males or females only takes place when the sexes are segregated.

Even the term “segregation” is judgmental. Every society has its own organization of the sexes. However, in pre-class societies, in which women were not ruled over by men, same-sex organization in collective households or hunting or rituals was not oppressive. On the whole, such societies made room for more sexes, sexualities and gender expressions, and socially accepted sex reassignment than is allowed for in the patriarchal organization of modern imperialist societies.

Dubbing Afghanistan as a “prison culture” for oppressed sexes and sexualities allowed post-invasion articles in the U.S. and British media to make it seem as though “gay liberation” was a collateral benefit of imperialist massive bombing raids, invasion and military occupation.

But imperialism has tried to lock down Afghanistan like a prison. The “don’t ask, don’t tell” Pentagon command didn’t bring liberation from the Taliban. It brought the Taliban. It was the CIA and “Defense” Department that armed and trained the Taliban and Osama bin Laden and other counter-revolutionary forces to crush the 1978 Revolution—which was taking action, with women in the lead, to liberate Afghanistan from semi-feudal rule.

After the Pentagon hammered the country with bombs, and Special Forces battered down the doors of homes, U.S. and British journalists in Kandahar followed behind, demanding that peoples under siege and under occupation talk publicly

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Venezuelan representative describes goal of 'power to the people'

During a recent U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange conference held in Tijuana, Mexico, Workers World interviewed Oswaldo Vera, a representative in the Venezuelan National Assembly and member of the Socialist Workers' Bolivarian Force.

One of the major aspects of the constitutional reform proposed in Venezuela was the empowerment of the people, what is referred to as the "transfer of power to the people." WW asked Vera to explain this concept.

Oswaldo Vera: In Venezuela, one of the orientations that we have discussed is the transfer of the power to the Venezuelan people. Within that we have proposed five councils that will be the beginning of the transfer of power.

The first one, already established, is called Communal Power and is for communities that include no more than 250 families. All the members of these 250 families meet and choose a spokesperson and a working team that is obliged to take care of security, nutritional needs and services, including water services and housing needs. In addition, a treasurer is selected to administer the resources for projects the community proposes and begin to develop the plan. Before this, the job depended fundamentally on the mayors, and there was a long process of searching for the mayor and looking for officials who could approve the resources.

The constitutional reform contained more proposals. Part of the project was to add 250 more families to the first group of 250, creating a network of Communal Councils (CC). It would have its own bank for the community, which would include a larger operational range. Later, we have a larger body, what we call a federation of the CCs, that would include parishes (neighborhoods) or larger areas. The fundamental idea is to eventually create a Confederation of CCs with the same characteristics and decision-making power but that would deal with larger projects for the area. That is what we have called the transfer of power.

But we also have it in the labor area. We now have some national companies that are companies of social production and will guarantee nutrition, gas, electricity and other services for all the population. The Workers' Councils (WC) in those areas will elaborate the plans, make the planning and deliver the services. These are companies of the workers, of the ones who live in that zone, with direct contribution from the national executive. The profits of that company will be invested in that zone.

Also, in large companies like PDVSA [Venezuela's state oil company], the role of the workers and the WC is to monitor the policies that the state develops. The workers will supervise the managers and they will have the capacity to propose projects and show how they should be oriented. But above all, the workers will monitor the company; if by any circumstance a project is elaborated that does not agree with the development plans for the nation, the WC, the organization of the workers, can denounce it under mechanisms that are already established to stop policies of this nature.

Another is the Peasants' Councils (PC). They are the ones in charge of investigating and finding out if large tracts of land are not being cultivated, are not producing. The PC can divide them into small parcels and distribute that land among the peasants in the area so that the land becomes productive with agricultural activity and/or raising cattle. The state will provide the necessary equipment, which will become the property of the peasants—not individually, but the collective property of the organized peasants.

Also Student Councils are being created. Those, jointly with the Ministries

of Education and Higher Education, will elaborate policies and the role that students should have. The students, on a voluntary basis through those Councils, will go to the poorest and less-developed areas to educate the population. It is what we have called the "transfer of the schools" of the colleges and universities in each area of work. We have an example in higher education, what we called the University Villages. It is not that the Venezuelan who lives far away will go to the university; it is that the university will be transferred to the communities. This education must later be revalidated in the regular system.

WW: Who will be in charge of monitoring the resources given to the different councils and ensuring that they are used for what the community decided?

OV: Indeed. As well as a treasurer, there is also a comptroller from the community, from the council. They are in charge of watching those who have the responsibility of investing the funds. In this way we have what we call the transfer of power to the people; of not depending on a civil employee, or a mayor or a governor. No, the organized community begins to solve its own problems.

It has an important role. For example,

companies could hoard foods or any type of product necessary for the people. Those councils have the obligation, the necessity to investigate—both the Workers' Council, because they are the ones who produce and they know what is being produced, and the community, which knows that a particular supermarket or commercial center could be hoarding.

The councils also check to see if there are children who are not attending school, if there are youth who are not engaged in sports or education, and can elaborate a census that allows the Venezuelan state, the national government and the National Assembly to devise policies to rescue those youth.

The community's decision is by itself a basis for the organisms of the state and the courts to make a decision and it is binding. In the case, for example, of factories, the organism is the Ministry of Labor and the Labor Inspector, where any irregularity like violations of conditions or projects that are not appropriate can be denounced. An investigation is opened and it could cause the dismissal of the official or administrative sanctions. It could even be tried in court depending on the seriousness of the fault. □

Venezuelan discusses referendum at NYC meeting



PHOTO, ABOVE: ROBERTO MERCADO. WWPHOTO, LEFT: MONICA MOOREHEAD

Marcos García, the second secretary in charge of Labor Affairs at the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Washington, D.C., spoke to a gathering of sympathizers of the Bolivarian Revolution in a meeting Dec. 11 at the Solidarity Center in New York.



García, who is also a leader of the Metro de Caracas Worker's Trade Union, spoke about the current situation in Venezuela following the rejection in the Dec. 2 referendum of the proposed reforms to the Venezuelan Constitution. Without making a formal presentation, García answered many questions about the referendum, the state of the Revolution and of the trade union movement in his country.

—John Catalinotto

about sexualities in their cultures.

While admitting, "There appears to be no shame or furtiveness about them, although when approached, they refuse to talk to a western journalist," Reid turned around and charged the Pashtun with "lying" because they did not confess to his definition of their sexualities.

Maura Reynolds quotes Mohammed Daud, a motorbike repair person, in her Los Angeles Times article. "These are hard questions you are asking," he says. "We don't usually talk about such things." (Los Angeles Times, April 3, 2002)

Rambo gay bashing

The Pentagon brass—which carry out a crusade of terror against gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans GIs in its own ranks—gay-bashed Afghanistan, too.

Just days after the Pentagon began drop-

ping a torrent of high-tech ordnance from the sky over Afghanistan, the Associated Press released worldwide a photograph of a gay-bashing epithet, "High Jack This F—," scrawled on one of the bombs on a fighter jet parked on the flight deck of the USS Enterprise.

The widely circulated photo created uproar among lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) organizations in the United States. However, all but one of these groups debated it from the standpoint of a hate-speech issue; they did not denounce the aerial bombardment and post-9/11 Pentagon military aggression against Afghanistan.

AP spokesperson Jack Stokes used the weapon of xenophobia to deflect anger, saying that the photographer "is not American, and that [epithet] meant nothing to him." Stokes didn't bother taking a

stab at explaining how the photo got past everyone else in the process of selection and production.

At the Pentagon, Navy Rear Adm. Stephen Pietropaoli said the ship's crew had been told to edit "the spontaneous acts of penmanship by our sailors." He concluded, "We want to keep the message positive." Pietropaoli is referring to messages written on bombs about to drop on the population below.

The release of the photograph was very much in keeping with the menacing psy-op messages of U.S. and British imperialism. Political pundits, late-night-television comics, newspaper and Internet cartoons gay-baited and transgender-baited the Taliban and Osama bin Laden—including threats of anal rape. The threat of rape and sexual and gender humiliation is a primary weapon of CIA and mercenary interro-

gators of Muslim men and women.

The following quotes, vicious and offensive, are repeated here solely to spotlight the threat of violence that smolders in these reports, which are broadcast around the world.

In an article in The Scotsman on May 24, 2002, journalist Chris Stephen wrote, "In Bagram British marines returning from an operation deep in the Afghan mountains spoke last night of an alarming new threat—being propositioned by swarms of gay local farmers."

British Royal Marine James Fletcher said: "They were more terrifying than the al-Qaeda. One bloke who had painted toenails was offering to paint ours. They go about hand in hand, mincing around the village."

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40th Anniversary of the PFLP

Workers World Party extends warm fraternal greetings and solidarity to the comrades of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine on the occasion of its 40th anniversary.

Following the brutal Israeli seizure of the West Bank, Gaza, Golan Heights and Sinai in the June 1967 Six-Day War, U.S. imperialism and its Zionist puppets waged a military and propaganda offensive against the Palestinians and all Arab people. Meanwhile, Washington was waging a bloody war against the people of Vietnam and Southeast Asia. This was the context in which the Arab National Movement, founded by Dr. George Habash, and other revolutionary forces united to create the PFLP on Dec. 11, 1967.

The significance of the PFLP’s founding cannot be overstated. Just as the emergence of a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist formation was crucial for the Palestinian people’s national resistance, it also provided an invaluable voice for the Palestinian cause within the global movement of workers and oppressed people. The many militant actions carried out by people’s heroes like Leila Khaled—both within and outside the borders of historic Palestine—continue to inspire generations of anti-imperialist fighters.

Through its program of class struggle, anti-imperialism and national liberation, the PFLP has been a powerful counterweight to the unending din of imperialist lies promoting the Israeli state as a “democratic oasis” rather than the colonialist, racist command post for imperialism that it truly is.

Through many difficult twists and turns of the struggle, both in Palestine, in the Arab world and globally, the PFLP has maintained its revolutionary socialist perspective and never abandoned its goal of seeing all Palestine liberated. The PFLP has consistently maintained its ability

to interact, collaborate and give leadership to emerging forces in the national movement, from the difficult days of its founding through the first Intifada, the Oslo period and the Al-Aqsa Intifada.

That proud tradition continues today, with the PFLP’s militant opposition to Bush’s Annapolis “peace conference,” the blatant attempts to break up Palestinian unity, the vicious siege of Gaza and the ongoing campaign of assassination, torture and brutality by the terrorist Israeli state, armed and funded by U.S. imperialism.

WWP and its youth organization, Youth Against War and Fascism, were the only groups in the U.S. to organize protests against the Six-Day War in 1967. Since that time, we have taken very seriously the responsibility of educating and challenging the progressive, anti-war and anti-capitalist forces within the belly of the beast to raise Palestinian liberation to the forefront of every anti-war and anti-imperialist mobilization.

We know, just as the imperialists on Wall Street and in the White House do, that Palestine is the crux of the struggle for liberation throughout the Arab world and all of the Middle East.

To Dr. Habash and Leila Khaled, to martyrs like Abu Ali Mustafa and imprisoned champions like Ahmad Sa’adat, to the fighters in the refugee camps and the youths in the streets of Gaza, and to all of our comrades of the PFLP: you inspire us to resist, to sacrifice, to oppose imperialism fearlessly and by any means necessary.

Break the siege of Gaza!
Defend the right of return!
Free Ahmad Sa’adat and all political prisoners!
Victory to the Palestinian resistance!
From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free!
Workers World Party National Committee ☐

From ice to steam

Waiting for major changes, or qualitative changes, can be extremely frustrating, especially when those changes could affect so many people—like a revolution for instance. Imagine a major change in the balance of power between the ruling class and the working class, which the bosses depend on for their life-blood—profit.

But most major changes don’t occur over night. They are the result of incremental steps that make quantitative changes, the painstaking accumulation of which finally result in a significant shift that changes the relationship of one thing to another.

For example, take an iceberg. Apply the same amount of heat over a period of time and after a while ice becomes water—a qualitative change. Whatever happened to be living on that iceberg had better make major life changes or get swallowed up and drown.

When revolutionaries began advocating change in Cuba by exposing injustices, one after the other—passing out one leaflet after the other or organizing one meeting after the other—each of these quantitative actions built up the heat necessary to make a qualitative change in the consciousness of working and poor in Cuba. This change turned anger and rage into organized rebellion against their ruling class. The same process was repeated in many countries in Africa and Latin America.

Through the struggle workers become organized and build networks of communication, either through word-of-mouth or by pen ... or printing press. In fact, all the aforementioned revolutions, including the great Bolshevik Revolution, depended on communication facilitated by revolutionary publications.

Workers World newspaper consistently points out the lessons of struggle and remains anti-imperialist and unabashedly biased towards our class. Struggle is what Workers World newspaper is all about, with writers who not only report news but are the activists and leaders helping to make those incremental changes to build this movement into a powerful force against war, racism, lesbian/gay/bi/trans oppression, women’s oppression and the scapegoating of immigrants—all to build working-class-wide unity.

Our paper remains optimistic about the struggle because we know that even when the movement for

social change seems to hide or be still for a moment, the collective memory of battles once fought does not go away. Coming on the heels of the racist genocide of neglect during the Katrina crisis, six Black youths from Jena, La., who never personally experienced slavery or Klan lynchings, felt to their core what those nooses hanging on the “white only” tree meant. And their actions made national changes to the consciousness of working people that will inspire further changes, and never be forgotten.

Qualitative changes are big and fantastic, but remember, quantitative changes make them happen. Today economic conditions are changing rapidly and may well provide the conditions necessary for the next qualitative change favorable towards revolution in this country. And major changes in this giant of imperialism have the biggest effect on the entire world. That’s why Workers World newspaper works so hard to highlight the struggles buried by the organs of the ruling class—the corporate media—and to show how these struggles contribute to the general movement for socialism in the U.S.

As we reach the end of this year and look toward this coming period of greater challenges to our class, we know this means greater responsibility for our paper. We need to make sure that we have the resources necessary to buy the equipment, stay connected and maintain the high level of reporting necessary to help make qualitative change in the belly of the beast possible. The corporate media are well funded but their money comes soaked in the blood of workers. We can’t use that money—we need your money to keep our lights on, machines well tuned and eyes wide open for the new year. If money comes with strings attached, then we’d rather be pulled by our class, not corporations. This is why we depend on you to make contributions and take out subscriptions.

Back to that iceberg converted into water. If you keep raising the temperature of water it makes another qualitative leap—it turns into a gas. That gas can power a steam engine that can move a steamroller capable of knocking down all barriers to winning real justice and liberation for working and oppressed people the world over. Help Workers World newspaper convert an iceberg into gas for such a steamroller, without even contributing to global warming! ☐

S.F. opposes New Orleans demolitions

Continued from page 5

ished in the past decade”; therefore be it Resolved, that the San Francisco Labor Council send a letter to the New Orleans housing authorities and the Department of Housing & Urban Development, protesting the planned demolition of five public housing developments—with bulldozing set to begin as early as Dec. 15, 2007, and calling for the tens of millions of dollars earmarked for the demolition to be spent instead to increase the number of low-income, affordable housing units in New Orleans.

Copies of the letter to be sent to labor organizations in New Orleans including the Greater New Orleans Central Labor Council. ☐

U.S.-Britain gay-bashed Afghanistan

Continued from page 13

“It was hell,” said Corporal Paul Richard. “They put some music on and ask us to dance. I told them where to go,” said Cpl. Richard. “Some of the guys turned tail and fled. It was hideous.” These quotes from military aggressors are a “homosexual panic defense,” by which gay-bashers later claim in court that they were justified to torture and murder because the victim made sexual advances.

Even after the U.S. and British invaded Afghanistan—dominating the country militarily and crafting a legislative and political façade of independent government and law—the imperialists did not remove the law which they had said in pro-war agitation made same-sex love a capital offense.

Next: Same-sex rights: Dec. 18 New York Times pits Iraq and Iran.
Read parts 116 and 117 on Afghanistan and the entire Lavender & Red series at www.workers.org. Look for the Lavender & Red logo.
E-mail: lfeinberg@workers.org.

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U.S./NATO want to carve out Kosovo from Serbia

By John Catalinotto

The ultra-right-wing forces now running Serbia's Kosovo province plan to announce its secession from Serbia in 2008. The U.S. and most NATO powers support this reactionary move, continuing their strategy of "divide and conquer" in the Balkans. This strategy has pulled Yugoslavia into pieces, leaving the region unstable, divided and now facing new internecine wars.

Employed throughout the 1990s, this strategy succeeded in separating once socialist and united Yugoslavia into a half-dozen capitalist mini-states. It is an error to call these states "independent." They are weak neo-colonies dominated by the West, pillaged mainly by U.S., Italian, and German-based corporations and banks, and dependent on imperialism.

Now Serbia, once the strongest and most multinational republic in the Yugoslav Federation, is itself threatened by the same reactionary forces that tore apart Yugoslavia.

Who rules Kosovo now? The same people who led the armed gang called UCK by its Albanian initials against Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Former General Hashim Thaci, a UCK head, has been Kosovo's president since an election in November. This grouping has ultra-right-wing politics appealing to the most reactionary and chauvinist aspects of Kosovar-Albanian nationalism.

Though armed by the U.S. and Germany, the UCK was unable to win serious fire-fights in Kosovo until the Pentagon stepped in. The U.S. military used its overwhelming air power to carry out a murderous 78-day bombing attack on Yugoslavia in the spring of 1999. U.S. and NATO bombs and rockets destroyed much of the industrial infrastructure in Serbia, also bombing bridges, schools and 147 hospitals.

Under the pressure of this bombing and the threat of an even bloodier invasion, the Yugoslav government agreed in June 1999 to let NATO forces occupy Kosovo. With NATO backing, the UCK set up a corrupt, rightist regime that proceeded in the following eight years to persecute and drive out of the province many of the remaining people of Serb, Jewish, Roma, Egyptian and other nationalities, including the pro-Yugoslav-oriented Albanians. Most of these refugees found a new home inside non-occupied Serbia or Montenegro.

According to the agreement that ended the bombing, the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 1244, which reaf-

firmed "the commitment of all Member States to the sovereignty and territorial integrity" of Yugoslavia, of which Serbia is the successor state. That means that Washington, Berlin, etc., will break international treaties and international law when they recognize Kosovo's secession.

No liberation, no independence

UCK means "Kosovo Liberation Army," yet no one was liberated when it came to power. Even Albanian Kosovars who opposed the UCK had to flee the province. Under UCK rule, Kosovo became a center for trafficking in illegal drugs and enslaving women and children through prostitution rings—and a corrupt regime that made the UCK-run enterprises look like minor-league versions of Halliburton and Blackwater.

The Thaci regime is expected to declare "independence" for Kosovo early in 2008. The new entity, however, would be even more dependent on NATO and on Western imperialism than the other new Balkan republics. Its main role will be as a NATO cats-paw in the Balkans and as a transit space for oil and gas pipelines that avoid Russian territory on their way west.

The imperialists already control most of Serbia's—including Kosovo's—profitable industries and commerce. This includes Kosovo's valuable Trepca mines. But a weak and separate Kosovo with a completely dependent regime is a reliable military base where NATO troops can remain indefinitely.

Soon after NATO troops occupied Kosovo in 1999, the U.S. built a major military base there called Camp Bondsteel. There are still 7,000 U.S. troops stationed there among the 16,000 NATO troops still in Kosovo. And now the European Union has decided to send 1,600 more to be there when the Kosovo regime announces it will separate.

As war opponent Michel Collon pointed out before 1999 in his book "Liar's Poker," by controlling Kosovo the U.S. gains control over a route for oil and gas pipelines from Central Asia and the Caucasus to Europe that avoids Russian territory.

The Russian government, on the other hand, is the main power opposing Kosovo's secession. Moscow supports Resolution 1244 and the territorial integrity of Serbia.

Media demonizes Serbs again

With Kosovo in the news again, the corporate media have again gone on a binge demonizing Serbs. They do this

even though the current government in Belgrade had the full backing of U.S. secret services and nongovernmental organizations funded by billionaire George Soros when it overthrew the Socialist Party government led by Slobodan Milosevic in October 2000. Among such groups was the right-wing youth group "Otpor" or "Resistance," which Washington later used to organize reactionary movements in Ukraine, Georgia, and now Venezuela.

Once having deposed Milosevic and the Socialists, the imperialists started pressuring the new Serbian regime—the one they had installed—to keep making further concessions to Western penetration. Separating Kosovo from Serbia would be a painful blow, especially because Serbia has historic monuments and churches in the northern part of the province. Since the start of the occupation in 1999, about 200 medieval Serbian churches have been destroyed by the UCK under NATO watch. If the Kosovo regime makes a unilateral declaration of independence before the Jan. 20 presidential election in Serbia, it could provoke sharp political struggles in Serbia.

The media have been repeating all the same lies that they repeated in 1999 to justify the "humanitarian" bombing of Yugoslavia. The main lie was that Serbia was committing "genocide" of the Albanian Kosovars. In 1999, U.S. and German government spokespeople claimed that Serbs had killed 100,000 Kosovar Albanians and buried them in mass graves.

Expecting to find bodies everywhere, a United Nations team searched occupied Kosovo all summer of 1999 and found a total of 2,108 bodies of all nationalities. Some were killed by NATO bombing and some in the war between the UCK and the Serbian police and military. No massacres. No genocide.

Puerto Rico, Ireland, Basque Country?

The U.S., Britain and France, along with Germany, are expected to give full diplomatic recognition to the Kosovo entity if Thaci declares "independence." Some European Union members—Malta, Cyprus, Greece, Romania and Spain (in this case, because of its own oppression of the Basque Country)—have said they would not recognize it.

One might justifiably ask if Washington

will also recognize the independence of Puerto Rico, if London will recognize the northern Irish counties' right to join the rest of Ireland and if France (and Spain) will recognize self-determination for the Basque Country. There is little doubt the rulers in these capitals would answer, "No."

There is a difference between the situations just described and that in Kosovo. In Kosovo there are, along with some smaller minority peoples, two major nationalities: Serb and Kosovar-Albanian. Each of these two nationalities is oppressed by imperialism, as are the other nationalities in the former Yugoslavia. The imperialists have been able to use the rightist UCK gang first against Yugoslavia and now Serbia, but neither nationality oppresses or exploits the other the way the imperialists in the U.S., Britain and France oppress and exploit the nationalities in their colonies.

When Tito's partisan movement drove out the German occupiers in 1945 and set up the Yugoslav Socialist Federation in the Balkans, the new socialist regime passed laws that both protected the interests of all the nationalities in Yugoslavia and tried to hold them together in one state. It succeeded for about 45 years despite historic differences among the nationalities. Then came the counterrevolution in the Eastern Bloc countries and a concerted attack by the imperialists on Yugoslavia.

To break up Yugoslavia, the imperialists have envenomed every difference among the nationalities by supporting the most reactionary parties and groupings in each of the six Yugoslav republics. This included financing those forces that collaborated with the Nazis during the German occupation in World War II. Imperialism has now imposed neo-liberal economic policies on the republics that promote competition and make cooperation impossible.

The only road to real independence from imperialism in the Balkans is to again take up the struggle for a united federation and join it to a struggle for socialism.

The writer helped organize the June 2000 Peoples Tribunal on Yugoslavia in New York and co-edited the book "Hidden Agenda: the U.S. NATO takeover of Yugoslavia" with International Action Center co-director Sara Flounders.

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Washington and NATO strategists invoked humanitarian principles to justify their war. But they practiced the divide-and-conquer tactics used by empires since the days of Imperial Rome.

Hidden Agenda: U.S./NATO takeover of Yugoslavia

By Ramsey Clark & various authors

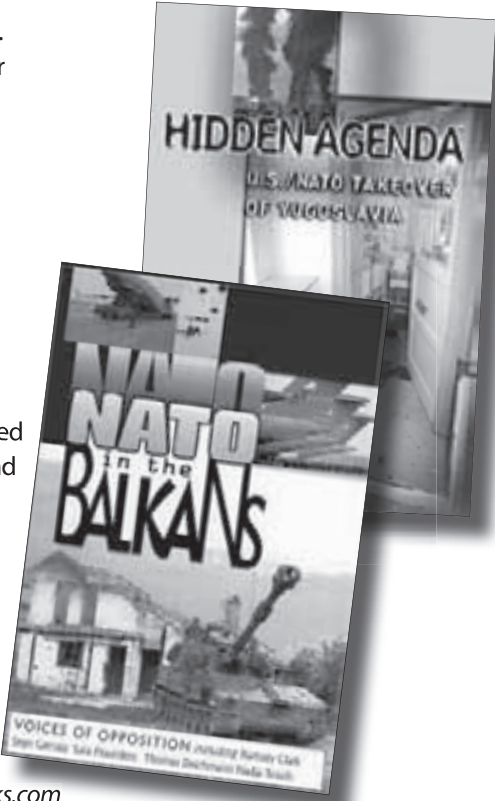
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NATO in the Balkans: Voices of Opposition

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¡Proletarios y oprimidos de todos los países, uníos!

Trabajador@s conversan sobre las relaciones entre América Latina y EEUU

Por LeiLani Dowell
Tijuana, México

Trabajador@s de Cuba, Venezuela, México y los EEUU compartieron aquí información y solidaridad en una conferencia sindical durante el fin de semana del 7-9 de diciembre. En charlas durante sesiones plenarias se habló del caso de los Cinco Cubanos; las relaciones entre EEUU, Cuba, Venezuela y México; los acuerdos de “libre comercio” versus la Alternativa Bolivariana de las Américas (ALBA); y la lucha por los derechos de l@s inmigrantes.

Irma Schwerert, diputada de la Asamblea Nacional de Cuba y madre de René González, uno de los Cinco Cubanos, representó a los cinco presos políticos encarcelados en prisiones de los EEUU y a sus familias en un evento de apertura el 7 de diciembre dedicado exclusivamente al caso. El Comité Internacional para

Liberar a los Cinco Cubanos presentó la película “El Proceso”, un nuevo documental auspiciado conjuntamente por el Instituto Cubano de las Artes e Industrias Cinematográficas (ICAIC) y la cadena Telesur de Venezuela.

Una serie de charlas presentadas en un panel el sábado, destacó representantes del Consejo de Trabajadores Cubanos (CTC) y la Fuerza Bolivariana Socialista de Trabajadores de Venezuela. Raymundo Navarro Fernández, director de relaciones internacionales del CTC, hizo un análisis de la historia y los métodos de dominación de los EEUU en América Latina. Él dijo que “Usted puede votar por un gobierno pero usted no puede cambiar un sistema político –lo que significa que hay un proyecto neoliberal encima de todo”.

Oswaldo Vera, coordinador nacional del grupo de trabajadores venezolanos, habló sobre los resultados del reciente referendo constitucional en su país y los planes para

continuar y profundizar al proceso revolucionario allá.

Elvira Arrellano –llamada la “Rosa Parks” de la lucha de l@s inmigrantes en los EEUU, quien fue deportada recientemente de los EEUU hacia México y separada de su hijo, Saulito– y Emma Lozano de La Familia Latina Unida, participaron en el panel sobre inmigración, así como también José Medina, miembro del Congreso Mexicano quien jugó un papel clave en la fundación de una nueva organización que existe en ambos lados de la frontera sobre los derechos del pueblo mexicano/chicano.

Namibia Donadio del grupo juvenil FIST cuyo nombre significa “puño” y está formado por las siglas de las palabras que en inglés son Luchemos Contra el Imperialismo, Unámonos (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together) habló sobre el porqué l@s jóvenes están inspirados por Cuba y Venezuela y se solidarizan con

estas revoluciones. Habló también de su experiencia en un viaje organizado por FIST a Cuba el verano pasado.

Una carta abierta llamando al liderazgo del AFL-CIO y de la Confederación Internacional Sindical a que cesen sus calumnias contra Cuba en relación a los derechos laborales fue presentada a la conferencia y firmada por l@s asistentes. La carta también pide a l@s afiliad@s a que trabajen para liberar a los Cinco Cubanos y poner un fin al bloqueo de los EEUU contra Cuba –la prohibición de comerciar y viajar a Cuba que niega visas a l@s representantes para entrar a los EEUU, haciendo necesario que tales conferencias se celebren en otros países.

Un llamado a actividades a favor de los derechos de inmigrantes para el Primero de Mayo –día internacional del trabajo y el segundo aniversario del Gran Boicot Americano de 2006 fue muy bien recibido. □

Antiimperialistas se reúnen para discutir y actuar

Por Sara Flounders
Calcuta, India

No fue meramente otra conferencia internacional. No fue meramente un taller de habladurías.

El día anterior a la conferencia sobre “Imperialismo, globalización, sionismo— Resistencia a la ocupación militar y a la guerra”, que comenzó el 28 de noviembre, una poderosa manifestación de más de 50.000 personas llenó las calles de Calcuta.

La mayoría de l@s delegad@s internacionales venían de áreas que han tenido exitosa resistencia armada contra los ataques imperialistas. Sus experiencias se vieron reflejadas en las resoluciones.

El Foro Anti-imperialista de Toda la India (AIAIF, por sus siglas en inglés) organizó la conferencia con un fuerte enfoque sobre la guerra imperialista estadounidense en el Medio Oriente y el papel jugado por el sionismo. Una delegación importante del Líbano asistió, incluyendo miembros del Hizbolá. El gobierno indio le negó la visa a vari@s delegad@s, incluyendo los de Irán.

Otr@s delegad@s vinieron de la resistencia armada de Nepal y de Palestina. También vinieron de Turquía, Bahréin, Bangladesh, Rusia, Francia, Alemania, Canadá y Estados Unidos. A ést@s se unieron 1500 delegad@s y cientos de observador@s de todas partes de la India.

El auditorio Mahajati Sadan se llenó a capacidad. Fuera del auditorio había áreas con varias casetas donde había pantallas que permitieron que más personas pudieran oír y ver las presentaciones.

Cuando l@s delegad@s internacionales entrábamos al auditorio, l@s delegad@s de la India nos recibían con saludos y consignas alzando los puños.

Marcha y manifestación militantes

El día anterior, muchos contingentes diferentes habían marchado al consulado de Estados Unidos llevando cientos de pancartas y mantas con consignas contra

la guerra y antiimperialistas. Una consigna que se vio mucho decía “Muerte, muerte al imperialismo estadounidense.”

Jóvenes de Nepal tocaban instrumentos tradicionales mientras marchaban, recibiendo mucho apoyo que refleja el entusiasmo por una resistencia armada contra el régimen feudal en Nepal, que está directamente al norte de este estado, Bengálí del Oeste.

Durante la manifestación y en la sesión de apertura de la conferencia del día siguiente, Hussein Sukur describió conmovedoramente cómo Estados Unidos suplió a Israel con las bombas que exterminó a su familia entera en Beirut. Él está decidido a que se le impongan cargos de criminal de guerra a los culpables.

Manik Mukherjee del AIAIF puso el tono a la conferencia con una charla sobre la situación internacional desde el colapso de la Unión Soviética y el bloque socialista. Él describió la aguda crisis de la economía de los países imperialistas y las crecientes contradicciones entre ellos sobre el mercado mundial.

Miembros líderes de Hizbolá dieron sus presentaciones sobre la Resistencia Libanesa y los cambios logrados. Abdul-Halim Fadlallah habló sobre las condiciones y la organización que ha “infligido al estado invasor una gran derrota, la primera de su tipo en la historia del conflicto Árabe-Israelita.” Mustafa Haj Ali explicó que “la experiencia en el Líbano muestra que es posible resistir contra el imperialismo.”

Fue una participación de gran significado por luchadores de la resistencia islámica en una reunión de mayoría izquierda secular.

Varias presentaciones fueron sobre la firme oposición a las ocupaciones por los Estados Unidos en Irak, y Afganistán y contra el apoyo del imperialismo estadounidense al estado sionista de Israel. También se dirigieron a la falsa “conferencia de paz” en Annapolis y a la continua y heroica resistencia palestina. Esto fue refle-

jado en las resoluciones de la conferencia.

La lucha armada revolucionaria en Nepal contra el estado feudal fue planteada por Suman Jaday del Partido Comunista de Nepal-Maoísta. Este grupo lidera la resistencia que ha liberado a dos terceras partes de Nepal y ha forzado negociaciones con las fuerzas sociales arcaicas que todavía tienen las riendas del estado.

La lucha presente contra la globalización y los planes de una Zona Económica Especial (ZEE) en Nandigram, a 60 millas de Calcuta, recibió la atención de much@s delegad@s a la conferencia. Por primera vez una lucha popular ha detenido exitosamente uno de estos centros de súper explotación.

Según el Banco Mundial, más de 3.000 zonas de ese tipo han sido establecidas en años recientes en 130 países. Unos 220 ZEE existen en India y más de 500 se están planeando. Una conferencia sobre el imperialismo en esta era necesita tener una perspectiva clara sobre esta nueva ofensiva laboral de las corporaciones multinacionales, respaldadas por las armas del Pentágono e implementadas por la represión de los gobiernos locales.

Ramsey Clark, ex Fiscal General de Estados Unidos y fundador del Centro de Acción Internacional, se dirigió a la conferencia en la sesión de apertura y en la manifestación del día anterior. El segundo día de la conferencia, Clark fue a Nandigram con otr@s dos delegad@s del CAI—Steve Kirshbaum y Sara Flounders. Regresaron justo antes de finalizar la conferencia para dar un reporte sobre la continua lucha allá y la represión severa del gobierno en contra del campesinado local.

Esta represión la lleva a cabo un partido de izquierda reformista que se ha mantenido en el poder en el estado Bengálí del Oeste y en la ciudad de Calcuta por 30 años y que desafortunadamente se llama Partido Comunista de la India –Marxista (PCI-M). Sus políticas están siendo opuestas exitosamente por una amplia coalición de campesin@s en el dis-

trito de Nandigram y por varios partidos revolucionarios de izquierda, incluyendo el Centro de Unidad Socialista de la India, que fue una fuerza importante en la conferencia antiimperialista de Calcuta. Este debate ha tocado las políticas de la izquierda en la India y los medios masivos de comunicación. La política represiva ha sido el foco de manifestaciones masivas y de huelgas.

Much@s de l@s delegad@s indí@s habían jugado un papel activo en defender la lucha de Nandigram. Algun@s habían sido severamente golpead@s y hasta balead@s. Fue un vivo ejemplo del impacto de la globalización corporativa en el movimiento mundial.

Al concluir, la conferencia votó para expandir sus esfuerzos en una formación antiimperialista mucho más amplia: El Comité Coordinador de Solidaridad Internacional Antiimperialista y Popular. Pidieron que Ramsey Clark lo encabezara y que Manik Mukherjee fuera su Secretario General, cosa que ambos aceptaron. La organización tiene la intención de extenderse a muchos otros países y luchas de resistencia. La conferencia fue presidida por Dhrubojyoti Mukhopadhyay.

Las resoluciones finales afirmaron la solidaridad con la resistencia en Irak y en el Líbano, solidaridad con Irán, pleno apoyo a la demanda palestina del derecho a regresar, solidaridad con la Revolución Bolivariana en Venezuela y la Revolución Cubana, y la condena de la agresión y desestabilización imperialista en América Latina, especialmente contra Cuba y Venezuela.

Dos resoluciones trataron sobre sucesos internacionales que afectan a la India. Uno advirtió que el acuerdo nuclear entre los EEUU y la India forma “parte de un esquema para una colaboración estratégica aún mayor entre la India y los EEUU”. Una resolución contra las Zonas Económicas Especiales planteó “la explotación sin límites, el robo y el pillaje” por el capital foráneo y de la India y demandó que sean totalmente desarticuladas. □